

Council has budgets for Professional Services for a variety of reasons. These key reasons can be grouped in the following broad types:

- specialist technical advice,
- additional capacity for seasonal peaks,
- regulatory and compliance monitoring,

At times there are placeholder budgets for programmes of work that the exact detail is not yet known. Examples include digital transformation, business cases and feasibility studies.

Predominately the use of consultants is due to knowledge and expertise that is not held by Council Officers and providing technical support for specific tasks, or where pieces of work require temporary capacity over and above existing resourcing.

Building capacity within internal resources takes some time to realise the benefits of having these skills available internally. There would need to be a significant lead time to enable this capacity to be built – likely over an 18 month to two-year period. Some skillsets are not possible to resource internally, due to a lack of volume and at times highly specialised nature of the type of work. There would be no advantage gained by employing a staff member whose workload would require technical expertise on two resource consent applications per year (for example).

Some examples of professional services usage by category are provided below;

Specialist technical advice:

This is advice of a specialist nature and provides for a wider pool of expertise for targeted pieces of work

- Tax Advice
- Asset and Insurance Valuations
- External Legal Advice
- Treasury Advice & S&P Credit Rating services
- Technical information to support organisational strategies (e.g. Stormwater)
- Specialised audits and support for ops compliance - HAZNO, Traffic management etc.
- Local Water Done Well investigations & modelling

Additional capacity for seasonal peaks:

This is for where there are seasonal and project demand peaks over and above internal resourcing. It is for shorter time periods where permanently staffing would not be appropriate. In some cases, this can be directly on-charged to users of services.

- Planning & Building Services (on-charged)
- Support for Asset Management Information Systems (over and above internal capability)
- Condition Assessments of Specialised Plant for profiling renewal forecasting
- Project management

Regulatory and Compliance Monitoring

This is for where we require additional expertise to meet regulatory requirements and compliance with consents or regulations that we are subject to. Some standards and regulations require us to use an independent person to verify our work.

- Annual Safety plans and assessments of critical infrastructure such as bore-heads
- Water quality device maintenance
- Development Contribution Policy support and advice
- Technical Advice to support processing of Private Plan Changes
- Consent compliance monitoring and condition assessment for cremator

Summary

There are some risks in using the professional services budget to develop the skills in-house which includes the retention of the skillset that is being developed.

If it is Councils intention to reduce the size of the consultancy budget over time, then an approach might be to simply reduce the budget now and if a skillset is required for a specific purpose then this is brought back to Council with any associated project.