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Department of Finance

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Australian Government Regulator Maturity Model and Self-Assessment User Guide

2025

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Australian Government Regulator Maturity Model and
Self-Assessment User Guide 2025

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Introduction

The Department of Finance developed the Regulator Maturity Model and Self-Assessment Tool to help Commonwealth regulators evaluate and improve their regulatory capability at the entity level, as well as measure changes to their capability over time. The Model and Tool operationalise the Regulatory Policy, Practice & Performance Framework (the Framework) and support the delivery of fit-for-purpose regulation and regulatory systems.

Benefits of measuring regulator maturity and using the Regulator Maturity Model

Measuring regulator maturity allows identification of enterprise capability gaps and supports regulators to plan for, and respond to, future challenges that may arise. It is also an opportunity to inform a whole-of-government understanding of Commonwealth regulators' capability and provide an evidence base to help identify systemic capability gaps requiring greater support. Before the development of this model, there was no standardised way to measure regulator maturity across Commonwealth regulators, nor a baseline standard of maturity for regulators to compare themselves against.

Performing a self-assessment is not an audit or compliance exercise for regulators. Regulators assess their maturity at the enterprise level, and do not assess individual staff or individual regulatory decisions. Maturity assessments do not affect existing review rights for any decisions made by a regulator. Using the Model and Tool is a foundational step that is intended to be repeated every few years as part of continuous improvement, and to support removing impediments to excellence.

Measuring regulator maturity can also provide insights into the efficacy of existing regulatory resources, such as Resource Management Guide 128 (Regulator Performance) (RMG-128), to ensure these resources continue to uphold and support better regulatory practice.

The key benefits for regulators of using the Model and Tool are the ability to gain valuable information about their enterprise capability level and an understanding of strengths, weaknesses and opportunities. This enables regulators to identify areas where they can celebrate success and appropriately target capability building against identified areas of focus for improvement. For example, this could include identifying opportunities to refine guidance materials or increase knowledge sharing.

Using the Model and Tool can also inform development of performance measures by regulators and help to prioritise activities for the next 1-2 years following a self-assessment. Regulators will be able to benchmark themselves against their self-assessment results over time to help measure progress against their performance goals and focus their efforts strategically.

Who should use the Regulator Maturity Model?

The Model is designed to be relevant to all Commonwealth regulators regardless of institutional form or responsibilities. Commonwealth regulators are Commonwealth officials that perform regulatory functions, including standalone regulators and areas within policy departments undertaking regulatory functions. Regulatory functions include educating,

administering, monitoring, driving compliance, and enforcing regulation. This includes regulators involved in technical, economic, and policy-making areas.

While it is intended to be used at the entity level, regulators may choose to assess an individual regulatory function within a department or area within a regulator. Larger regulators may need to collaborate across multiple teams, branches and divisions. Smaller regulators, such as those with an operational focus, may need to collaborate with relevant corporate areas.

While using the Model and Tool is not mandatory, we strongly encourage regulators to undertake a self-assessment to gain insights into their capability and to identify opportunities to increase effectiveness as a regulator.

How often should maturity self-assessments happen?

Feedback from consultation during development of the Model and Tool supports regulators undertaking a self-assessment every 2 years or following significant changes to their regulatory scheme. This allows appropriate time for regulators to use their self-assessment results to develop and implement improvement initiatives to address identified gaps.

How does the Regulator Maturity Model work?

Regulator maturity describes the level of capability an entity has in relation to the Framework and RMG-128 and its ability to:

- deliver on its objectives
- employ a range of regulatory tools and techniques
- develop an appropriate relationship with policy makers, peers, the regulated community and stakeholders, and
- build an effective internal regulatory culture.[1]

The Model and Tool are designed to be qualitative and focus on the behaviours of an entity or regulatory function. They do not enable direct one to one, detailed comparison between different regulators.

The Model is informed by existing Australian Government maturity models and Australian and overseas regulatory best practice initiatives that measure government agency maturity. The Model also considers recommendations of Australia National Audit Office reports, Parliamentary Committee Inquiries, Royal Commissions and other reviews into regulators. The maturity capabilities in the Model are aligned with lessons from these reports and reviews.

[1] United Kingdom Parliamentary Committee on Standards in Public Life, Striking the Balance: Upholding the Seven Principles of Public Life in Regulation Report, 2016, accessed 2 May 2024. Appendix 2 sets out an approach for thinking about regulator capability and maturity that has informed the Regulator Maturity Model.

The Model is deliberately aligned with the approach of the Australian Public Service Commission's Capability Review Framework – using the same number of maturity levels and similar language to describe the levels. The Model has also been designed to complement existing Australian Government maturity frameworks rather than replicate this work. These maturity frameworks include:

- APS Capability Review Framework
- APS Data Maturity Framework and Self-Assessment tool
- Commonwealth Risk Management Maturity Model
- Commonwealth Integrity Maturity Framework
- Commonwealth Cyber Security Essential Eight Maturity Framework and assessment tool.

The Model and Tool will be refined over time and new resources may be developed to meet identified needs. For example, case studies in how regulators have used their self-assessment results to improve their maturity as a way of supporting other regulators to understand how to benefit from the Model and self-assessment process.

Capability Domains

The Model is designed to help regulators consider their level of capability against the Framework and RMG-128. The Model covers 12 capability domains that are linked to the 6 Framework principles. The 6 Framework Principles are available in full at Appendix A. Each capability domain addresses the expectations and behaviours for regulators that are described by the Framework and RMG-128. This includes:

- risk management, regulatory approach and foresight
- collaboration and engagement
- understanding the regulator's ecosystem
- transparency, accountability and integrity, governance and culture
- use of evidence, intelligence and data
- digital and technological innovation, and
- continuous improvement and evaluation.

Principle 1

Capability Domain 1.1

Capability to adjust regulatory approaches to meet changing risks and needs of the regulator, duty holders and stakeholders. Uses a mix of education, compliance, investigation, supervision, monitoring or enforcement led tools as appropriate for targeting regulatory activities to achieve regulatory priorities.

Capability Domain 1.2

Capability to apply anticipatory governance approaches or strategies, for example horizon scanning, trend analysis or key assumptions testing, to identify future risks, challenges and opportunities and respond accordingly.

Principle 2

Capability Domain 2.1

Capability to collaborate within own entity/regulatory function, with regulatory peers and others across different jurisdictions and with non-government stakeholders, and to use collaboration to create relationships that support strategic priorities.

Capability Domain 2.2

Capability to understand broader regulatory environment, costs, and impact of regulation, and support duty holders to comply with regulation.

Principle 3

Capability Domain 3.1

Capability to align communication and regulatory strategies and practices with user preferences, habits, behaviours, cultural, linguistic or accessibility requirements and the perspective of vulnerable duty holders while delivering fit-for-purpose regulatory outcomes.

Capability Domain 3.2

Capability to be trusted, transparent and accountable to duty holders and other stakeholders. Ensures simple, clear processes are place for duty holders and others as appropriate to appeal decisions, make enquiries or give feedback, or make complaints.

Principle 4

Capability Domain 4.1

Capability to create an effective culture and governance arrangements that support impartial decision-making and regulatory activities based on evidence and data, while maintaining independence and managing risks of being controlled or unduly influenced by duty holders or others.

Capability Domain 4.2

Capability to make use of evidence, intelligence and data for planning and performing regulatory functions, including sharing intelligence and data with regulatory peers where appropriate.

Principle 5

Capability Domain 5.1

Capability to use technological approaches that are inclusive and adapted to the needs of duty holders and stakeholders when performing regulatory activities.

Capability Domain 5.2

Capability to develop innovative ‘Digital First’ approaches to safely target regulatory efforts and achieve objectives.

Principle 6

Capability Domain 6.1

Capability to continuously improve systems, processes, and staff capability, including evaluating the effectiveness of regulatory activities in achieving regulatory outcomes and adjusting as required.

Capability Domain 6.2

Capability to deliver regulatory outcomes and ensure efforts and activities are prioritised appropriately. This includes identifying and learning from regulatory issues and near misses and sharing lessons with regulatory peers and policy makers.

Maturity levels

The Model describes 4 levels of maturity for each capability domain. Each maturity level in the Model builds on the behaviours of the previous level. We chose 4 levels of maturity as we considered this achieved the right balance between useability and level of detail.

The maturity journey is individual for each regulator and will not be linear. Not all regulators may need to aim for the 'Leading' level of maturity across all capabilities. When regulators consider what is an appropriate level of maturity to aim for this will depend on the regulator's particular circumstances, size and where they are along their journey as a regulator. It will also depend on a regulator's capacity, including whether this is constrained, as well as the regulator's legislative mandate and the regulatory environment in which the regulator works.

Level 1 – Emerging

Regulators with emerging capability may have little or no focus on current capability gaps or be unlikely to meet all current or future challenges. Little or no evidence that the regulator's work aligns with the Regulatory Policy, Practice & Performance Framework.

Level 2 – Developing

Regulators with developing capability have limited or inconsistent focus on current capability gaps and a limited ability to meet all current or future challenges. Limited or inconsistent evidence that the regulator's work aligns with the Regulatory Policy, Practice & Performance Framework.

Level 3 – Embedded

Regulators with embedded capability have good focus on current capability gaps and are likely to meet most current or future challenges. Consistent evidence that the regulator's work aligns with the Regulatory Policy, Practice & Performance Framework.

Level 4 - Leading

Regulators with leading capability have excellent focus on current capability gaps and are highly likely to meet all current or future challenges. Widespread evidence that the regulator's work aligns with the Regulatory Policy, Practice & Performance Framework.

How to complete a self-assessment

Step 1: Decide the scope of your self-assessment and who needs to be involved.

The Model and Tool are designed to be used at the entity level. However, you may choose to assess an individual regulatory function within your department or an area within your regulator. Regardless of which option you choose, it is helpful to assign responsibility to one person or team to coordinate the self-assessment. You may like to consider undertaking the self-assessment with a group of colleagues to gain a greater range of perspectives.

When answering the questions, speak with any areas within your entity or regulatory function who are responsible for the subject matter of the questions. You may need to collaborate across multiple teams, branches or divisions.

You may like to consider involving someone from outside of your entity or regulatory function to help you complete the self-assessment. For example, someone from another regulator or regulatory function within your department. The perspective of other colleagues can help avoid positivity bias.

We suggest you allow at least 6 weeks to complete an assessment in full.

Step 2: Gather any supporting information needed to answer the self-assessment questions.

You may need additional information to answer some questions. For example, some questions ask you about whether your entity or regulatory function addresses results from other Commonwealth maturity frameworks to uplift your regulatory practices.

Other information you may need includes internal documents outlining education, compliance and enforcement policies or strategies and information about other tools, processes or systems that you use in your entity or regulatory function.

Think about examples to support your answers as part of self-assessing your maturity. That is, the ‘what, how and how often’. This will help you to identify your assessment ratings as well as those areas that would benefit from further action.

Examples might include:

- Your actions, including the frequency that these occur.
- Whether actions occur across all levels/areas of your entity or regulatory function.
- Processes you have in place to ensure an action is happening.
- Frequency of reviewing and updating actions/arrangements you have in place.
- Who you engage with, and how and when engagement occurs.
- Evaluation processes you have in place to measure success.
- Frequency of re-assessing processes, strategies or risk-based planning or targeting for your activities.

- Where gaps in your regulatory system or processes have been identified, the actions you have taken in response.
- Tools or resources that you use, including those of other regulators, other Australian Government frameworks or maturity models, or other jurisdictions.

Step 3: Answer the self-assessment questions and determine your maturity ratings.

The Tool is an interactive Excel document that includes drop down lists of answers to choose from that map to one of the 4 maturity levels. If you are unable to answer a question, you can choose “does not apply/unable to answer/assess” as the rating.

There is space in the Tool for you to make notes or explain context for your answers, for example evidence supporting your rating or why you might be unable to answer a question. You might also like to record examples of your successes.

After you have answered all questions for a capability domain, record a maturity level rating for each question. Based on the ratings you have recorded, select an overall maturity level rating for that capability domain that best represents where most of the results align. Repeat this for each capability domain. Once you have completed this for all 12 capability domains, select an overall maturity level rating for your entity or regulatory function.

You will need to exercise your judgement to determine whether you have satisfied the requirements for a particular maturity level. If the ratings fall across multiple maturity levels, choose the rating where most of the results align.

For example, if for capability domain 6.1 your results were 4 ratings of ‘embedded’ and one rating of ‘developing’, you would choose a rating of ‘embedded’ for that capability domain. Diagram 1 gives an example how this might be assessed.

Diagram 1: Example self-assessment results

Principle 6: Continuously improved and outcomes-focused	**Response**	**Current Capability Level**	**Overall Capability Rating**
Capability 6.1: **Capability to continuously improve systems, processes, and staff capability, including evaluating the effectiveness of regulatory activities in achieving regulatory outcomes and adjusting as required.**			**Embedded**
63. Do you have continuous improvement processes in place for quality assurance and systematic review of your regulatory activities and processes, including for statements of reasons for decisions?	Yes, we do that/use that regularly across many areas of our entity/regulated function. (Embedded)	**Embedded**	
64. Do you have processes in place to monitor and evaluate your capability needs?	Yes, we do that/use that regularly across many areas of our entity/regulated function. (Embedded)	**Embedded**	
65. Do you have processes in place to identify capacity needs and opportunities for innovation? For example: •identifying legislative barriers that limit delivering your regulatory objectives •co-designing and testing solutions, and •adapting or adopting existing systems, standards or tools.	Yes, we are trialling doing that/using that more often. (Developing)	**Developing**	
66. Do you have processes in place for staff development to build regulatory capability based on identified needs, including evaluating capability building processes to ensure these are effective? For example, induction training, regular refresher training, auditing a sample of decisions.	Yes, we do that/use that often in our entity/regulated function. (Embedded)	**Embedded**	
67. Do you evaluate your regulatory performance against your Statement of Expectations and Statement of Intent and include evaluation results in your annual performance statements/annual report?	Yes, we check that often. (Embedded)	**Embedded**	

Step 4: Share your results with the Department of Finance.

After completing your self-assessment, share your rating results with the Regulatory Foundations Branch in the Department of Finance via RegulatorCapability@Finance.gov.au. Your self-assessment results should be cleared by an appropriate SES officer for your entity or regulatory function before you provide them to us.

Your results will help us understand the capability needs of regulators and give us insights for other tools that could support regulators. We will treat any information shared by you with us as confidential and will not share identified information with other Commonwealth regulators or departments.

If you have questions or would like further guidance on using the Model and Tool, please contact the Regulatory Foundations Branch via RegulatorCapability@Finance.gov.au.

Using your self-assessment results

Once you have conducted a self-assessment of your capability across your entity or regulatory function, you will understand your baseline level of maturity at that point in time.

Analyse the results of your self-assessment and identify priorities for each of the maturity domains. You may like to consider your entity or regulatory function's strategic plan and align your priority areas to the measures in it. You may also need to consider expectations of stakeholders and duty holders.

Develop a Maturity Action Plan to identify follow up actions that can be taken to strengthen your capability and maturity. You will need to identify any resources needed and who will be responsible for implementing actions in the Maturity Action Plan and by when.

Consider how you will review and adjust your Maturity Action Plan. You may also wish to use your self-assessment results and Maturity Action Plan to inform development of performance measures.

Finally, consider when you will undertake your next self-assessment so that you can compare results and progress.

Develop a Maturity Action Plan

Based on your self-assessment, identify:

- Your top 2-3 priorities for each capability domain and why they are priorities.
- Actions that you will need to take, and any resources required.
- Who will be responsible for taking actions.
- When you want actions to be achieved.

Table 1: Example Maturity Action Plan

Priority area for improvement	Actions to strengthen capability	Resources needed	Who will be responsible	When can this be achieved by

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is a ‘duty holder’?

The Model and the Tool use the term ‘duty holder’ to mean citizens, businesses or other organisations who have duties or obligations under regulation (that is, regulated persons or entities).

What is meant by a ‘conflict of interest’?

Resource Management Guide 208 (Managing conflicts of interest and confidentiality) describes a conflict of interest as circumstances that exist when a public official or other person has a personal interest, or another duty that could affect or be affected by, how the public official or person performs their public or official functions or duties.

A real (actual) conflict of interest exists where you have a personal interest or competing duty that could affect or be affected by the way you perform your official functions or duties.

An apparent (perceived) conflict of interest exists where a reasonable person might think that you have a personal interest, relationship or competing duty that could affect or be affected by the way you perform your official functions or duties, even though there is no actual conflict of interest.

What is ‘undue influence or control’?

The Model and the Tool use the phrase ‘undue influence or control’ to mean circumstances where a regulator is not acting independently of the influence of others, for example duty holders or stakeholders. This is also sometimes described as ‘regulatory capture’.[2]

What is an ‘emergent voice’?

Although there is not one single definition, the Model and Tool use ‘emergent voices’ to mean diverse voices who may face challenges being heard. This may include Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people, people with cultural, linguistic or accessibility needs, or as a result of nationality, ethnicity, race, age, gender, sexuality, profession or geographic location.[3]

Who is a ‘vulnerable duty holder’?

The Model and the Tool use ‘vulnerable duty holder’ to include people affected by family and domestic violence, who are homeless, or are in crisis (such as recovering from a disaster). This can also include businesses or organisations who might be in crisis.

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[2] For example, see Pink G (2021) ‘Navigating Regulatory Language’ *RECAP Consultants Pty Ltd*, accessed 21 June 2024. The Maturity Model and the Self-Assessment Tool follow the language used by the ‘OECD Best Practice Principles for Regulatory Policy: The Governance of Regulators 2014’, The Governance of Regulators | OECD Best Practice Principles for Regulatory Policy | OECD iLibrary, accessed 21 June 2024.

[3] For example, see https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-inclusion#1, accessed 21 June 2024 and https://international-review.icrc.org/commitment-to-diversity, accessed 21 June 2024.

How often should something be done for it to be occurring ‘regularly’?

The Model and the Tool use ‘regularly’ to mean occurring at uniform and consistent intervals. The timing of the interval will depend on the action involved and the needs of the entity. Examples of different activities occurring regularly are:

- Publicly available content, for example summaries of decisions made by the regulator, being reviewed and updated quarterly.
- Staff undertaking refresher training courses every 12 months.
- Governance arrangements being reviewed every 2 years.

Appendix A – 6 Framework Principles for Regulation

1. **Targeted and risk-based**

Regulation must be targeted, risk-based and proportionate.

2. **Integrated in existing systems**

Take a whole-of-system approach by integrating, leveraging, improving, and modernising existing regulatory systems, where appropriate.

3. **User-centred**

Regulation should put people and business at the centre through user-centred design and delivery.

4. **Evidence-based and data-driven**

Regulation is most effective when it is data-driven and based on available evidence, and when its effectiveness and impact on business and the community is well understood.

5. **Reflective of the digital era**

Regulation should reflect the realities of the digital era and take full advantage of digital and technology capabilities and practices, while also ensuring equitable access to regulatory systems, including for those with low digital connectivity and literacy.

6. **Continuously improved and outcomes-focused**

A system-wide practice of stewardship to evaluate and improve regulation, ensuring regulatory systems are transparent and responsive to evolving regulatory environments and shifting expectations from government and community.

Appendix B – Resources to help you undertake a self-assessment and use your results

APS Academy: Policy fit for the future: The Australian Government Futures Primer

Australian Federal Police: Australian Government Investigations Standard

Australian Government APS Reform: The Charter of Partnerships and Engagement

Attorney-General's Department: Administrative Review Council Best Practice Guide 1 – Lawfulness

Attorney-General's Department: Administrative Review Council Best Practice Guide 2 – Natural Justice

Attorney-General's Department: Administrative Review Council Best Practice Guide 3 - Evidence Facts and Findings

Attorney-General's Department: Administrative Review Council Best Practice Guide: Statements of Reasons

Australian Public Service Commission: Guidance for Agency Heads - Gifts and Benefits

Australian Public Service Commission: Conflict of Interest

Australian Signals Directorate: Essential Eight Maturity Model and Assessment tool

Commonwealth Ombudsman Automated Decision-Making Better Practice Guide

Commonwealth Ombudsman Better Practice Complaint Handling Guide

Commonwealth Ombudsman Statement of Expectations

Department of Finance APS Data Maturity Framework and Maturity Assessment Tool

Department of Finance Benchmarking Risk Management Capability Commonwealth Risk Management Maturity Model and assessment tool

Department of Finance *Public Governance Performance and Accountability Act 2013* associated instruments and policies

Department of Finance Resource Management Guide 128 Regulator Performance (RMG-128)

Department of Finance Resource Management Guide 208 Managing conflicts of interest and confidentiality with the non-government sector (RMG-208)

Department of Finance Resource Management Guide 302 Australian Government Charging Framework (RMG-302)

Department of Finance Risk Management Policy Commonwealth Risk Management Policy Framework

Department of Industry, Science and Resources: APS framework for engagement and participation

Department of Industry, Science and Resources: Voluntary AI Safety Standard

Digital.gov.au: Digital Experience Policy

Digital.gov.au: Policy for the responsible use of AI in government

National Anti-Corruption Commission: Commonwealth Integrity Maturity Framework and assessment

National Anti-Corruption Commission: Conflicts of interest and corrupt conduct: A guide for public officials

NSW Government: Sludge Audit tools

New Zealand Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet: Future Thinking Tools

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner: Commonwealth Information Publication Scheme

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner: Guidance on privacy and developing and training generative AI models

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner: Guidance on privacy and the use of commercially available AI products

Office of the Australian Information Commissioner: Privacy Guidance for organisations and Government agencies

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Observatory of Public Sector Innovation: Innovation Playbook (accessed from the resources drop down menu)

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development: Towards anticipatory governance guidelines for public sector organisations