

RETHINKING BUILDING CONSENT DELIVERY THROUGH COLLABORATION

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As the local government sector explores new ways of working, it's clear: collaboration is no longer optional - it's essential.

Across NZ, councils are facing growing pressure to deliver building consent services that are faster, more consistent, and more resilient - while managing fluctuating demand, workforce shortages, and increasing expectations for efficiency.

At the same time, there's a national conversation underway about councils working more closely together, including proposals that encourage greater collaboration, shared services, and in some cases, consolidation.

In this context, a group of councils in the Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions are already demonstrating what a more connected model can look like in practice.

Moving from Siloed Delivery to Shared Capacity

Through Co-Lab Building Services (CBS), participating councils are working together to process building consents across boundaries, shifting away from traditional, siloed approaches.

Instead of each council managing demand independently, CBS enables overflow work to be shared across a regional network based on capacity. This helps smooth peaks and troughs in demand and reduces pressure on individual teams.

Building Consistency & Capability

The model is doing more than balancing workloads - it's also helping to strengthen capability and consistency across participating councils.

By working as a collective, Building Consent Authorities can draw on a wider pool of expertise, supporting more consistent decision-making and improving overall quality across the system.

As Imelda Bolton, GM – Customer Services, Waikato District Council, notes: “Working as a collective presents a valuable opportunity to work together to lift the customer experience through greater consistency and quality of consent decisions. Ultimately,

the aim is to give our customers greater confidence in the process no matter where they are.”

Strengthening Resilience in a Constrained Environment

Workforce constraints remain a significant challenge across local government, particularly for specialised roles in building consent processing.

By sharing resources across councils, the CBS model reduces reliance on contractors and provides greater flexibility to respond to demand changes. This creates a more stable and resilient consenting function overall.

Better Outcomes for Communities

For customers, the impact is practical: improved responsiveness, more consistent decision-making, and greater confidence in the consenting process, regardless of which council is involved.

A Model for What's Next

While still evolving, CBS demonstrates what is possible when councils move beyond traditional boundaries and adopt more collaborative operating models.

As the sector continues to explore new ways of working, shared service approaches like this offer a clear example of collaboration in action, and a practical step toward a more connected future for local government service delivery.