

Request for provider: Executive leadership in workforce readiness

Issued by: Sustainable Business Council (SBC)

Budget: \$20,000 (excl. GST and expenses)

Indicative timing: Delivery to commence by 30 June

About the Sustainable Business Council (SBC)

The [Sustainable Business Council](#) (SBC) is an Executive-led membership organisation convening New Zealand's leading businesses to advance sustainable business practice and system-level change.

SBC's membership includes 130+ businesses across all sectors, representing approximately \$158 billion in collective turnover (around 41% of GDP) and nearly 287,000 full-time jobs. SBC is part of the [BusinessNZ network](#) and is the New Zealand Global Network partner to the [World Business Council for Sustainable Development \(WBCSD\)](#), providing significant reach and influence across business and policy audiences.

SBC is launching a flagship social sustainability initiative to deliver material impact and support long-term business resilience and competitiveness.

Context

SBC's report [Driving Sustainable Growth: Opportunities for New Zealand's Economy](#) and earlier analysis [Strengthening the 'S' in ESG](#) highlights a consistent gap between ambition and execution on social sustainability, as well as the opportunity that closing this gap presents. While awareness of social risks has grown and data availability has improved, this has not translated into consistent, material changes in major business decisions.

A critical pressure point within this gap is workforce readiness for medium to long term changes to the context and way in which business operates. As businesses navigate decarbonisation, digitalisation, electrification, and productivity transitions, leaders face complex choices. These have significant implications for everything from workers, skills, and redeployment, to long-term capability. While these impacts are widely recognised as strategically important, they are frequently treated as secondary in practice.

Insights from WBCSD reinforce that the core challenge goes beyond measuring social issues to ensuring social information genuinely influences Executive decisions.

Three structural barriers consistently limit action:

- Competing incentives, where workforce and social impacts lose out to immediate commercial pressures
- Diffuse accountability, which allows responsibility for workforce impacts to be deferred or diluted
- Unclear decision thresholds, resulting in workforce and social risks rarely prompting decisive action

As a result, organisations remain stuck at intent rather than action.

This work focuses on what actually changes Executive decisions, and how accountability, thresholds, and leadership behaviour can enable earlier action on workforce readiness.

Purpose of the engagement

SBC is seeking a provider to deliver a time-bound project that focuses specifically on decision-making for workforce readiness during transition to a low emissions economy.

The purpose of this project is to:

- Surface the structural and behavioural factors that consistently prevent workforce and wider social considerations from shaping Executive decisions
- Identify the conditions under which workforce impacts are treated as decision-critical rather than deferrable
- Clarify how accountability, escalation, and leadership behaviour can be reshaped to enable earlier, more credible action on workforce readiness during transition
- Equip SBC with practical, Executive-ready tools that support decision change, not just better discussion

Integration with other SBC workstreams

This engagement sits alongside SBC's broader work to position social sustainability as a driver of productivity, competitiveness, and long-term growth, including an analysis of the economic evidence for social sustainability.

It is also intended to inform a subsequent SBC-led Executive pilot, with outputs designed for live Executive-level engagement and workshops.

Scope

The selected provider will be expected to deliver the following components within a compressed timeframe - by 30 June 2026.

1. Targeted discovery
 - Conduct up to 6–8 structured interviews with senior executives to understand how workforce readiness risks and opportunities are currently showing up in Executive decision-making.
2. Decision logic development
 - Develop a clear decision logic or flow that articulates how workforce readiness considerations intersect with major transition decisions (e.g. investment, automation, asset retirement, business model change).
3. Executive decision tests
 - Produce a set of 5–6 practical decision tests or challenge questions that boards and executive teams can use to stress-test decisions from a workforce readiness perspective.
4. Definition of “what good looks like”
 - Articulate a concise, practical description of what good workforce readiness looks like at an Executive level, suitable for use with member leadership teams.
5. Executive-ready output

- Prepare one primary output (either a concise briefing paper or a slide deck) that brings together the decision logic, tests, and insights in an Executive-ready format

Deliverables

The provider is required to deliver a concise workforce readiness briefing for Executives that distinguishes decision-useful workforce readiness considerations from surface-level activity, and highlights where Executive teams consistently struggle to translate insight into action.

The engagement will include:

- A concise (6–8 page or equivalent slides) executive briefing that explains:
 - What distinguishes decision-useful workforce readiness signals from activity-led or compliance-focused approaches
 - Where Executives most commonly struggle to act in practice.
- A one-page Decision Logic Map that illustrates, at a practical executive level:
 - Common types of workforce considerations that emerge in transition-related decisions
 - The workforce impact thresholds or risk signals that typically trigger escalation to Executive level
 - How competing incentives, delivery pressures, or framing of risks can override workforce considerations in decision-making
 - Where accountability commonly becomes blurred, deferred, or contested in practice
- A set of 5–7 executive-level questions that clarify:
 - Which Executive role is typically required to own a workforce-related decision
 - What level or type of workforce information is sufficient to materially influence that decision

Ways of working

This engagement is suited to an individual consultant or small senior-led practice who:

- Is credible and confident working with senior Executives
- Is action oriented - motivated by decisions landing, not report production
- Can operate at pace with ambiguity and judgement
- Is comfortable challenging Executives constructively
- Is comfortable exploring why well-intentioned organisations struggle to turn intent into action, and constructively testing the narratives that contribute to delay

Conditions of contract

- Contract start: As soon as possible
- Delivery to commence: No later than 30 June
- Budget: \$20,000 + GST (excluding expenses)

All organisation-specific information shared during the engagement will be treated as confidential. SBC retains ownership of all accountability, decision-clarity, and credibility materials developed and may reuse, adapt, or apply them across future pilots, programmes, or standards-setting initiatives.

Submissions for services

Please provide the following information to [Jay Crangle](#) by **COP Weds 27 May**.

- Name and role of consultant(s) carrying out the work
- One example of helping leaders navigate complex workforce trade-offs
- Proposed approach (brief – half a page maximum)
- Two referees from related or recent projects
- Pricing of the work
- Provider sustainability commitment and ability to operate in the Aotearoa New Zealand context

Evaluation

The following criteria and weightings will be used to evaluate submitted proposals.

Criteria	Weighting	What this means in practice
Executive-level credibility and judgement	25%	Demonstrated ability to work directly with CEOs and Executive leaders, challenge constructively, and operate confidently in high-stakes, ambiguous settings.
Ability to define decision-ready workforce actions	25%	Including the ability to identify and challenge structural or incentive-based blockers to action, not just gaps in information, capability, or role clarity.
Facilitation and synthesis capability	20%	Ability to facilitate Executive-level discussions, surface trade-offs, and synthesise learning into grounded insights about what credible action looks like in practice.
Commitment to sustainability in Aotearoa New Zealand	15%	Evidence of the provider's own commitment to sustainability within an Aotearoa New Zealand context, including understanding of te Tiriti o Waitangi and the ability to engage in ways that value te ao Māori.
Value for money and fit with SBC's role	15%	Overall value relative to scope and senior input, and a clear understanding of SBC's role as convenor and bar-setter, with the consultant operating in a supporting role.