



**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,  
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**  
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI

# Digital Boost Programme

## Proposal for Change

September 2024

# Introduction from Ross van der Schyff

Tēnā koutou,

The Digital Boost Programme was established in 2020 as a COVID-19 Response to support business digital capability, with a goal to support 30,000 business with 'digital training.' The Programme at its peak, was a combination of online tools, training and resources, combined with a nationwide network of facilitators to support and encourage digital uptake.

There has been lots to celebrate in terms of the performance of the programme, with participants reporting increased revenue and business resilience's as a result of utilising the support available. Many New Zealand small businesses have benefitted from this free digital business training and assistance programme, and the learnings from this programme have fed into other successful Government digital training initiatives.

The tighter fiscal environment, combined with a shift in Government priorities led to the Programme not securing further funding in Budget 23 and it has not received further funding as part of the current Government's Budget 24. As such, funding will end in December 2024.

As the Digital Boost programme is delivered through an external contract with the majority of funding allocated to maintain the programme platform 'Educate' and its associated 'Checkable' Tool, it is not feasible for MBIE to continue the programme without programme funding. However, we want to ensure that the great content and IP created by the programme can continue to be used and shared with Aotearoa businesses.

As MBIE, and Te Whakatairanga Service Delivery (TWSD) seek to ensure we are positioned well to respond to changing government priorities and reduced baselines, we need to be deliberate with how we use our resources and look for efficiencies

where possible. As a branch we will continue to look to best position ourselves for the future and make the most out of the opportunities that present themselves.

As such, it is not feasible as a branch to remain unchanged with the cessation of programme funding, so I am proposing organisational changes. I believe these strike the right balance of positioning us to deliver the Government priorities while also delivering on the public's expectation of being fiscally responsible. I believe this change will allow us to continue to support businesses on their journey to be more digitally capable and productive contributors of our economy.

This change process will be different in nature to those you will have seen undertaken across MBIE previously because the decision to cease funding has already been made by our government. We are now consulting with you on how we go about implementing this decision.

While the team has been aware that funding was coming to an end, I appreciate that this news will still be challenging. I want to thank you for your continued contribution to the programme over the last few years and for your professionalism and dedication, in the face of so much uncertainty. It is because of you that the programme has delivered so much to New Zealand businesses, and you should all be very proud of your contribution.

I acknowledge that any degree of change can be difficult. Please consider what support you may need and discuss this with me directly. Please ensure that you look at the range of support options available that are outlined later in the document.

Ngā mihi nui

**Ross van der Schyff,**  
**General Manager, Business & Consumer**

# Digital Boost 2024 – Change Proposal

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# How to read this document

This document outlines the proposed approach to implement the Government's decision to cease funding the Digital Boost Programme as part of the Budget 24.

## Scope of this change proposal

This consultation document focuses on those specific roles within Business & consumer that are currently dedicated to the delivery of the Digital Boost Programme.

As a decision has already been made by the Government to cease funding, the consultation process is focussed on how we are proposing to implement these decisions, the resulting organisational structure and the potential impacts to relevant employees.

## Understanding proposed changes to your position

The changes proposed to your position are outlined in the proposal. The organisational chart has been included at within this document to demonstrate the impacts that proposed changes would have. There is also a summary table at the end of this document with more detail about proposed changes to individual positions.

## Proposed change process

Find out more about MBIE's proposed change process on Page 11. This determines how we classify the impact to our people, based on the proposed impacts to their position.

Please note that due to the nature of this change, those employees who are permanently employed in a position that is proposed to be disestablished as a result of the Government's decision, will be deemed to have affected status immediately. This means that these employees will have immediate access to the reassignment and redeployment processes. Their affected status will also be applicable as part of any internal recruitment process with first consideration given to affected employees over other applicants, subject to those with affected status meeting the suitability requirements of the position.

As part of this consultation process, you are also invited to provide feedback on the proposed change process including the reassignment and redeployment processes as well as having the opportunity to provide your feedback on what other support we could reasonably provide you at this time.

## Let us know

The information included in this document reflects the organisational structure as recorded in MBIE systems in August 2024.

If you notice any inconsistencies in the organisational structure represented, please advise your people leader.

## Providing feedback

Your feedback is important to the success of any changes we make and will be carefully considered. While this change process will be different in nature to those you will have seen undertaken across MBIE previously, we still want to hear from you.

Specifically, I welcome your feedback on:

- our proposed approach to disestablishing those roles and functions that are currently dedicated to supporting the Digital Boost Programme;
- what close out or transition work is required and how you think it could be actioned;
- the proposed organisational structure as a result of these decisions; and
- the potential impacts and change process proposed for our people.

This proposal has been shared with the Public Service Association (PSA). You can contact the following PSA representatives during the consultation period for support and to discuss your feedback:

- Howden Gray: [howden.gray@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:howden.gray@mbie.govt.nz)
- Niki Williams: [niki.williams@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:niki.williams@mbie.govt.nz)

MBIE recognises that feedback can be provided in formats other than written, and as such will enable verbal submissions upon request. This also includes where the PSA wishes to speak to their collective submission orally.

Email feedback from individuals or groups – open for duration of consultation – should be sent to Ross van der Schyff directly to [Ross.vanderschyff@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:Ross.vanderschyff@mbie.govt.nz) by Wednesday 25 September 2024. If you wish to provide your feedback verbally, please email Diana Loughnan and we will arrange a suitable time.

### Indicative timeline

Activity	Indicative Timeline
Consultation opens	11 September 2024
Consultation closes	25 September 2024
Final decision	From 2 October 2024
Effective date	From 31 October 2024

### Supporting our people through change

People will have a wide variety of feelings in relation to the proposed changes. Please remember to be respectful of each other’s opinions and privacy. If you have further questions regarding this change proposal or your personal situation, have a conversation with your People Leader. Further information the support available is outlined on Page 13.

## Case for change

The Digital Boost Programme was established in 2020 as a COVID-19 response to support business digital capability, which included a manifesto commitment to fund 'digital training' for 30,000 businesses. The Programme at its peak, was a combination of online tools, training and resources, combined with a nationwide network of facilitators to support and encourage digital uptake.

While the Programme has been able to continue through 2020 to date, it has not received new funding since Budget 2022 (i.e. no funding provided in Budget 2023 or Budget 2024). In December 2022, the Minister of Small Business agreed to the reprioritisation of existing funding to maintain the most established parts of the programme (such as the Educate Platform and Checkable tool). Cabinet approved this reprioritisation and allowed the Programme to continue with available funding till December 2024.

In recent times we have seen user rates fall, from a height of over 43,000 new registrations in 2021 to just under 4,500 registrations in 2024 so far. The Educate Platform has also seen a significant drop in users accessing the video content, with active users dropping from over 14,500 in 2021 to just over 3,282 playing a video this year. The Checkable tool has also not been able to grow at the speed expected of such a sizeable investment with only 12,941 users since its inception in 2022. Associated support services are also not well utilised, with only 159 calls to the helpdesk in the last 3 months. It is clear without continued investment in these products they are not able to deliver on their value proposition.

The Digital Boost Programme sits within the Small Business Services Multicategory Appropriation (MCA). This appropriation has already seen a reduction of 10% on baselines in Budget 2024 and we expect the need to find further efficiencies in time for Budget 2025. We need to focus our resources on the Government priorities.

The Minister of Small Business has made clear his priorities for the Small Business portfolio and while he will be looking at options for supporting the digitisation of businesses in the future, the costs of the programme are too significant to be delivered within existing baselines. The Minister has also been clear that any opportunities we explore in the future are likely to look very different from the Digital Boost programme.

Since Budget 2024, significant effort has been put into working with the private sector to explore funding/revenue options for the Programme's continuation, particularly the continuation of the 'Checkable' tool which requires significant ongoing funding due to licencing costs. To date, the costs for the Checkable tool have proven prohibitive and while options are available to de-couple the tool from its platform to reduce its ongoing licencing costs, this prospect has not changed the position of the private sector.

We have considered maintaining the Programme until December 2024 when the funding will run out. However, the monthly costs of the Programme are significant and we are not seeing the return on investment with recent usage data. As the Programme looks to wind down, the Digital Boost team is also experiencing a reduction in work and the current workload cannot sustain the team size. The team has already been asked to focus efforts on transitioning the vendor contract and terminating early, which may provide savings that the Government has indicated it wishes to reprioritise. We believe it would be inconsistent to continue resourcing the programme at full levels given this activity therefore, we are proposing to close the programme effective from 31 October 2024.

As MBIE, and TWSD look to make changes to respond to the tighter fiscal environment, it is timely that Business & Consumer as a branch looks at how we are organised to deliver for the public we serve and act responsibly to reduce costs and manage our funding as fiscally responsibly as possible.

# Digital Boost Programme - Proposed Changes

As set out above, the Digital Boost Programme has not received further funding, has not been identified as a priority of the Government to receive further funding and MBIE is unable to meet the cost of the Programme within existing baselines. It is therefore no longer financially viable for the Digital Boost Programme to continue.

If the Digital Boost Programme is closed as currently proposed, there would no longer be a need for the Director Innovation position, and it would be disestablished accordingly. Similarly, with the work proposed to come to an end, the two Advisor positions would also no longer be required, and would be disestablished.

To support the proposed transition of the work and in response to the request of the Minister for Small Business and Manufacturing to develop other digital support options, it is proposed that the Principal Advisor is retained for an extended notice period to provide ongoing expertise around future digital capability options. It is proposed that the Principal Advisor is temporarily transitioned into the Business Advisory function to complete the transition and development of other options in time for Budget 2025. The Principal Advisor role is thus proposed to be disestablished in March 2025.

## **Work underway to support the closure of the programme:**

As part of the consultation, we are seeking suggestions on what close out and transition work you believe is required and how you think it could be actioned. To inform your feedback we have provided a summary below of the work currently underway and how we are proposing to resource this.

### *Educate Platform*

- The current Digital Boost Education Platform houses a significant number of training resources on the platform (over 1,000 videos). To manage the significant amount of video content, they will be integrated into business.govt.nz's YouTube channel. The business.govt.nz website will

encourage users onto the YouTube channel (supported by newsletter content and social media campaigns).

- Current users of the Digital Boost platform will be supported through the transition with clear communication on timing and how to utilise the resources through the business.govt.nz channels. While losing the bespoke Education platform will impact on the experience of some users, the training videos will be unchanged, and provide some continuity for current and future users.
- Additionally, collaboration with the private sector (including the Digital Boost Alliance members) will continue. They will be encouraged to continue promoting business digitalisation and the Digital Boost videos, and house Digital Boost educational videos on their channels.
- However, some support that is currently available through the Education platform will cease (i.e. the phone helpdesk service, weekly Q+As sessions, creation of new and updating existing training videos).

### *The Checkable Tool*

- The online diagnostics tool known as 'Checkable' which assesses a businesses' online presence and assists the business owner to build a digital business action-plan will cease. With no additional funding, the Checkable Tool will be stopped because it incurs ongoing costs. There is a small possibility that the Checkable Tool can continue if private sector funding is found but given this has been explored for sometime, this is looking increasingly unlikely.

#### *Early Termination of contract with academyEX*

- MBIE has already given notice to the external vendor that we are terminating the contract early. Negotiations are underway to organise the transition of content into business.govt.nz.

#### **Resource needed to support transition**

As set out above, it is proposed that the initial transfer of the educate Platform content and associated communications plan and stakeholder engagement would be supported by the Principal Advisor in recognition of the skills required to successfully undertake this work. As a result, the Principal Advisor would be provided with an extended notice period until March 2025 to ensure relationship continuity with existing stakeholders and retain institutional knowledge while we transition through BAU and support the Minister to identify future opportunities for supporting Small Business for Budget 2025.

The Principal Advisor is proposed to undertake this work given the strong alignment between the skills, knowledge and experience required of the Principal Advisor and the proposed transition and closure activities. We expect this work to be completed by March 2025 at which point the Small Business Services team will be able to manage the Digital Boost content and maintain any external relationships moving forward.

#### **Summary of the key changes:**

As a result of the Government's decisions, the following changes are proposed:

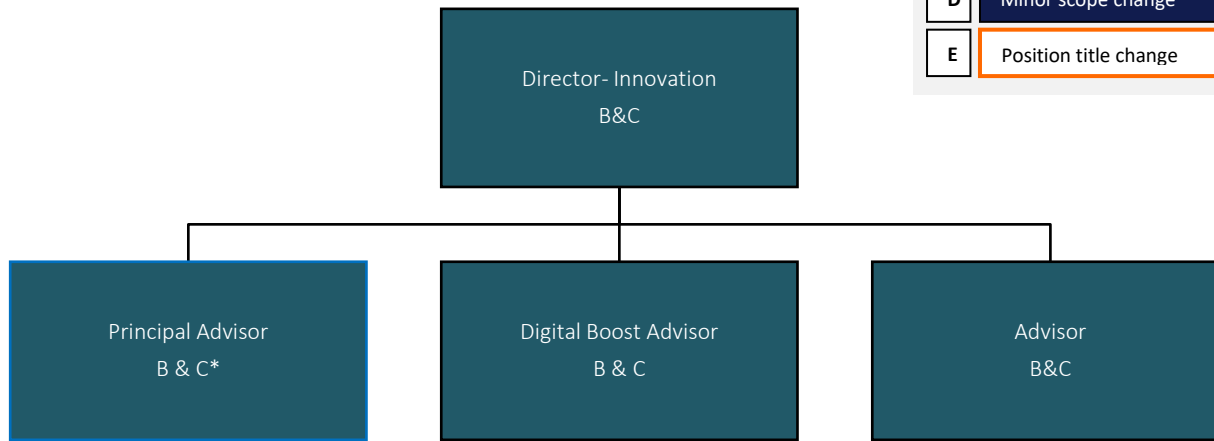
1. Disestablish the Director Innovation position.
2. Disestablish the two Advisor positions.
3. Disestablish the Principal Advisor position upon completion of the proposed close out and transition activities, anticipated to be in March 2025. The role would have a temporary reporting line change to Director Business & Consumer for the duration of this work.

Organisational charts are provided on the following pages to demonstrate how these changes would impact current positions and reporting lines. More detail about changes to individual positions is provided at the end of this document.

We welcome your thoughts on where our proposed approach to implementing the Government's decisions could be strengthened. If you believe there is an alternative to the changes proposed, please share your thoughts.



## Digital Boost Programme - current organisational chart



KEY			
A	No change	F	Within-group branch change
B	Disestablished position	G	New position
C	Reporting line change	H	Minor scope and reporting line change
D	Minor scope change	I	Position title and unit change
E	Position title change	J	Allocated via expression of interest

\*Please note that it is proposed that the Principal Advisor would have temporary change of reporting line to the Director Business & Consumer from 31 October 2024 to support the proposed transition and closure of the programme before being disestablished effective 31 March 2025

## Summary of proposed changes to Digital Boost team

The following table details the changes required due to the Government's decision to cease funding and close the Digital Boost Programme

Position title	Reporting line	Branch	Description of Change
Director Innovation	General Manager, Business & Consumer	Business & Consumer	Disestablished effective from 31 October 2024
Principal Advisor	Director Innovation	Business & Consumer	Temporary change of reporting line to the Director Business & Consumer effective from 31 October 2024 Disestablished effective 31 March 2025
Advisor Digital Boost	Director Innovation	Business & Consumer	Disestablished effective from 31 October 2024
Advisor	Director Innovation	Business & Consumer	Disestablished effective from 31 October 2024

## Proposed change process

Consistent with MBIE's employment agreements and recruitment policy, the following information summarises the standard change processes which would apply to any changes confirmed as a result of this consultation process. This includes reconfirmation, reassignment, selection, and redeployment.

### Reconfirmation

As part of the consultation process your substantive position may be proposed to be "reconfirmed". In these circumstances your substantive position in the proposed new structure is substantially the same as your current substantive position and you are the only person able to be reconfirmed to the role. Examples include - change in reporting line, title, a minor change in work content.

For reconfirmation to apply:

- The position description you are being reconfirmed into is the same (or substantially the same) as what you currently do, and
- Salary and other terms and conditions for the position are no less favourable, and
- Location of the position is in the same local area (note: this need not necessarily mean the same building and/or the same street).

If your substantive position is reconfirmed as part of the final structure, you will not need to take any action as you will automatically be reconfirmed into the position.

### Reassignment

Where team members are confirmed as being significantly affected by any of the confirmed changes the following available options apply:

- Apply for any other existing MBIE vacancies that you are suitably qualified or experienced for. This can be done via the MBIE website.

- Express an interest in voluntarily ending your employment without actively seeking redeployment opportunities within MBIE. MBIE may decline any expression of interest on the grounds that you have skills and experience that need to be retained and a reassignment option is available.

You will be considered an affected employee if you are permanently employed in a position that is:

- To be disestablished;
- To be changed to the extent that it cannot reasonably be considered to be the same position or a substantially similar position; or
- Subject to a significant location change outside of the current local area.

Please note that you will not be considered an affected employee if your substantive position is confirmed as having a change in business group, reporting line, job title or work location (where work location is within the "same local area" or region).

### Redeployment

If you wish to apply for any other existing MBIE vacancies (i.e., vacancies that are being advertised separately to the change processes), this can be done via the MBIE careers site at any stage of the process.

If you are considered an affected employee, this will need to be indicated as part of your application as first consideration will always be given to affected employees over other applicants subject to them meeting the suitability requirements of the position. Where applicable, a panel interview will be used as a contributing selection tool to assess the demonstrated skills, experience and qualifications against the key accountabilities and person specifications as outlined in the position description. In situations where there is more than one affected employee who meets the suitability requirements of the position an assessment will be made of the employee who is best for the role.

## **Review process**

If you disagree with the application of this process, including for example your reconfirmation or direct reassignment into a position as part of the final structure, you have the right of review. This process is set out in your employment agreement. You are encouraged to raise any concerns with your People Leader at the earliest opportunity so these can be worked through with you on a case-by-case basis.

## **Secondments and acting arrangements**

If you are currently on secondment or acting in a different position, there may be decisions confirmed for that position as well as your permanent substantive position. However, you will only be considered an affected employee if your permanent substantive position is significantly impacted.

People will continue in their temporary position until the end of the term currently in place unless otherwise advised.

## **Process for casual and fixed term employees**

Casual and fixed term employees, by the nature of their employment agreements, will not have access to the change processes set out above.

Upon completion of the change management process for affected permanent employees, any remaining vacant positions in the new structure would be openly advertised through standard recruitment and selection processes and any casual or fixed term employees would then be able to apply.

## Support through change

Work is a big part of your life. During organisational change, it's normal to have feelings of uncertainty, shock, anger, frustration, confusion, scepticism, and impatience. Please ask for support when you need it and remember to be understanding towards your colleagues who may be feeling anxious or distracted. You can talk to your People Leader, colleagues and/or union representative or the People and Culture team.

### Wellbeing support options

We recognise that change may be difficult and encourage you to reach out to your support network and draw on the resources available to you. You can:

- Talk to your People Leader
- Contact your union delegate or representative ([PSA](#)) / ([NUPE](#))
- Reach out to the [Wellbeing, Health and Safety Team](#)
- Use our [Employee Assistance Programme](#), which provides support for both work and personal life
- Call or text [1737](#) to access free counselling services from the national telehealth service

### Learning support options

Focusing on your personal growth and development is a helpful way to direct your attention during times of change. There are plenty of resources and directories to explore within MBIE, including:

- [Learn@MBIE](#) – our central learning platform that holds many free e-learning courses, including a series of e-learning modules focused on [change](#), suitable for all staff.
- [Percipio](#) – the world's largest online learning library. To access Percipio, select 'team/enterprise subscription' and then enter 'MBIE' in the site name field.

- [MBIE's library](#) – a large catalogue of books and scholarly works focused on subject expertise as well as broader skillsets like leadership capability.
- You can also reach out to People & Culture to discuss your development interests.

### Career development support

Our Employee Assistance Programme can assist with general career advice and is available for self-referral. This also includes budgeting and financial advice, personal development and coaching and personal legal advice.

### Outplacement support

Outplacement support is designed to help affected kaimahi with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to quickly transition into their next role. Support is provided as a programme which MBIE employees can take part in over a period, through an external provider. The programmes cover practical aspects related to career planning, job search, and networking.

Outplacement support is offered to MBIE people who are impacted by disestablishment of their position because of change. It will be offered if the person has been unsuccessful in securing another role at MBIE and is generally offered a month before the date of disestablishment. Please note that due to the nature of this change, outplacement support will be made available to all affected employees from the date of consultation.

MBIE people who have been offered outplacement support will continue to be provided with redeployment support from People and Culture, right up to the date of disestablishment.

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