

It's all about the relationship! - Building social licence to operate



Manaaki Whenua
Landcare Research

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Social licence to operate (SLO) definitions

A concept to describe the informal approval or acceptance that communities grant to a resource development company or industry.

(Thomson and Boutilier, 2011)

SLO defined in literature as ...

- ongoing and fluid
- levels of acceptance
- relevant to stakeholders, at multiple levels
- may be revoked
- (responsive to) changes in perceptions
- reflective of relationships

(Mapstone et al. 2017)



Social acceptance, reputation and trust

- When we talk about SLO, we are really talking about building social acceptance, reputation and trust
- Trust is a central concept of SLO
- Trust is cemented in social relationships; founded on ways people experience their relationships with each other and the institutions or organisations they interact with.
- **Key message #1 – Relationships and trust are central to SLO; therefore a 3rd party cannot get SLO for you**

SLO Engagement Framework



- Guide - there is no one-size-fits-all approach
- Provides an intervention logic
- Process is more important than the method



Socialising



- Socialising the concept of SLO with and within the organisation
- Critical first step
- Reflect internally on approaches, behaviours and culture and what influence these have on building the conditions for trustworthiness.



Trust, trustworthiness and SLO

- **Key message #2 – Trust cannot be demanded; it must be earned in the eyes of others.**
- Trust arises when organisations deliver approaches, behaviours and outcomes that demonstrate trustworthiness.
- Demonstrate honesty, competence and reliability
- Strong leadership

Reputation Index

- Colmar Brunton Public Service Reputation Index



OVERALL REPUTATION

TOP 10

2021

Fire and Emergency remains top of the pack.

Ministry of Health enters the top 10 for the first time, and Tourism New Zealand is back in the mix.

Callaghan Innovation jumps from 5th to 2nd place.

121		109	
112		108	
111		107	
110		106	
109		106	

PUBLIC SECTOR REPUTATION INDEX 2021

Reputation score increased / decreased by 3 or more points

COLMAR BRUNTON
A Kantar Company



Reputation, trust, credibility and legitimacy are all elements that come together in the concept of Social Licence to Operate (SLO) and contribute to social approval for an activity



Hearing



- **Key message #3 – Communities grant SLO.**
- The terms of a social licence are found in the values, expectations and perceptions of stakeholders
- More than just reducing risk to the organisation.



Hearing



- Transactional vs. Relational relationships
 - ...rather than appreciating that those communities have interest and perspectives that are valid and should be listened to, [industries] perception is oh, we just need to tell them what we're doing and in a more effective way... (Interview #2).
- Understanding what it is that communities are basing their approval on.



Integrating

- Translating it into action
- Collecting and evaluating data





Integrating



- **Key message #4 - SLO is a long game**
- There are no silver bullets, short cuts, or quick fixes
- SLO is not a permanent concept but is subject to change as opinions and perceptions change
- Organisations are not static – staff and budgets change



Reflecting



- Runs across all the steps
- Continuous process
- How do our actions inform and build trustworthiness?



Application



- Steps are interconnected
- Not necessarily linear in sequence
- Not necessarily of equal weight

Application - Predator Free Awarua Landscape project



- Introduction to SLO with Predator Free Southland Governance Group
- Key criteria for engaging with Awarua communities
- Interviews identified community aspirations and visions, key learnings from past engagements and perceived barriers for achieving a Predator Free Awarua.
- Developed an engagement roadmap – advice on strategies for engagement



Application

- Te Uru Rākau workshop and handbook
 - Handbook to help landholders engage to gain and maintain social licence
 - Workshop with Te Uru Rākau staff at all levels to socialize social licence in their work

- Our Land and Water National Science Challenge
 - Partnership with AgResearch, Otago, Cawthron, Dirt Road Comms and agribusinesses
 - Developing a Waka Māori stream to develop the framework into a truly bi-cultural model
 - Building social licence for entire sectors rather than place-based SLO
 - Develop tools that can be used at different scales, where appropriate, within the framework



4 Key SLO messages

1. Relationships and trust are central to SLO; therefore a 3rd party cannot get SLO for you.
2. Trust cannot be demanded; it must be earned in the eyes of others.
3. Communities grant SLO
4. SLO is a long game



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Our Land, Our Future

Tō tātou whenua, mō āpōpō