

Blueprint for Content Consolidation

A pragmatic plan for bringing council information together, without stopping the work.

PREPARED BY

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Summary

The Challenge

Every merging council faces some of the same worries in a major reorganisation:

- ▶ Staff fear they won't be able to find what they need once systems change.
- ▶ Core systems could break at the worst time.
- ▶ Residents might get bounced from office to office due to disjointed processes.
- ▶ And everyone is already tired of change.

This blueprint tackles those concerns head-on.

It establishes a clear and consistent way for staff to find information, understand processes, and work together as one organisation from Day 1.

It's a pragmatic plan for bringing council information together without stopping the work – meaning it's designed to be completed in-flight while day-to-day services keep running. The focus is on relieving pressure on your organisation with practical steps, not overwhelming it with theory or complexity.

The Approach

This blueprint is not an abstract methodology – it's built on real experience.

Information Leadership brings proven tools, integration capability, and delivery patterns that allow change to be executed safely at scale, while still tailoring the approach to each council's specific needs.

This blueprint does not prescribe a fixed delivery approach or sequence of steps.

Instead, it defines the critical components required to safely bring councils together, allowing a fit-for-purpose roadmap to be designed based on each council's specific context, constraints, and priorities.

It draws on what's been proven in New Zealand councils and other complex organisations.

We have done this before and know what works, from integrating decades of information to guiding people through change with minimal disruption.

For example, Information Leadership's Smart Integration platform already connects to the systems councils actually run: TechnologyOne OneCouncil, Datascape, MagiQ, ConsentIT, Authority and Pathway.

That means hooking your critical finance, property, and regulatory systems into the new environment is a solved problem, not a risky unknown.

We bring ready connectors and proven patterns, so your essential data flows keep working from Day 1.

The Focus

Crucially, the blueprint is grounded in low-disruption principles and practical staging to manage scale. It keeps costs down, focuses on what delivers value early, and provides a clear path to consolidate content and systems step by step.

In short, the blueprint shows how to combine the content from different organisations safely and sensibly. This delivers relief for your staff and assurance for your leaders.

You can prioritise what the new organisation needs to operate confidently from Day 1, rather than requiring full consolidation upfront.

The following sections provide guiding principles and then outline each workstream in the consolidation plan, summarising what each workstream delivers and why it matters.



From Day 1, staff need:

- ▶ **one place to go**
- ▶ **one way to find information**
- ▶ **one way to work together**

This blueprint ensures that environment is in place immediately, so the organisation can operate coherently from the outset, even while deeper consolidation continues.

Guiding Principles

Seven principles apply to each workstream. They keep the programme honest, cost-effective, and people-focused. They are designed to work across multiple councils, vendors, and parallel reform activity.



1. Structure before automation

Sort out the file plan, the metadata, and the rules first. Tools and AI only repay you once the structure underneath is sound.



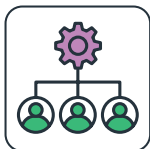
2. Prioritise what matters for Day 1

Not everything needs to be consolidated before the new council operates. Focus first on the information, processes, and services required for staff and customers to function confidently from Day 1. Further consolidation and optimisation can proceed in a controlled way after stabilisation.



3. Never break Monday

People need to keep working. Statutory services and daily work must run without interruption from Day 1 of any new entity. Nothing in the plan is allowed to break Monday.



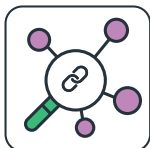
4. Unify people, not just content

Bring people together, not just systems and content. Change is felt through where people find things and how they work together. A new or updated intranet can be the front door to the new entity and the fastest way to make several organisations feel like one.



5. Time it well

Timing matters more than tidiness. The right content moved at the right moment beats perfect content moved late. Sequence carefully around statutory dates, peak workloads, and contract renewals.



6. Hunt the hidden links

Find the fishhooks early. In particular, systems connected through integrations need to be identified. Plan for these ahead of time.

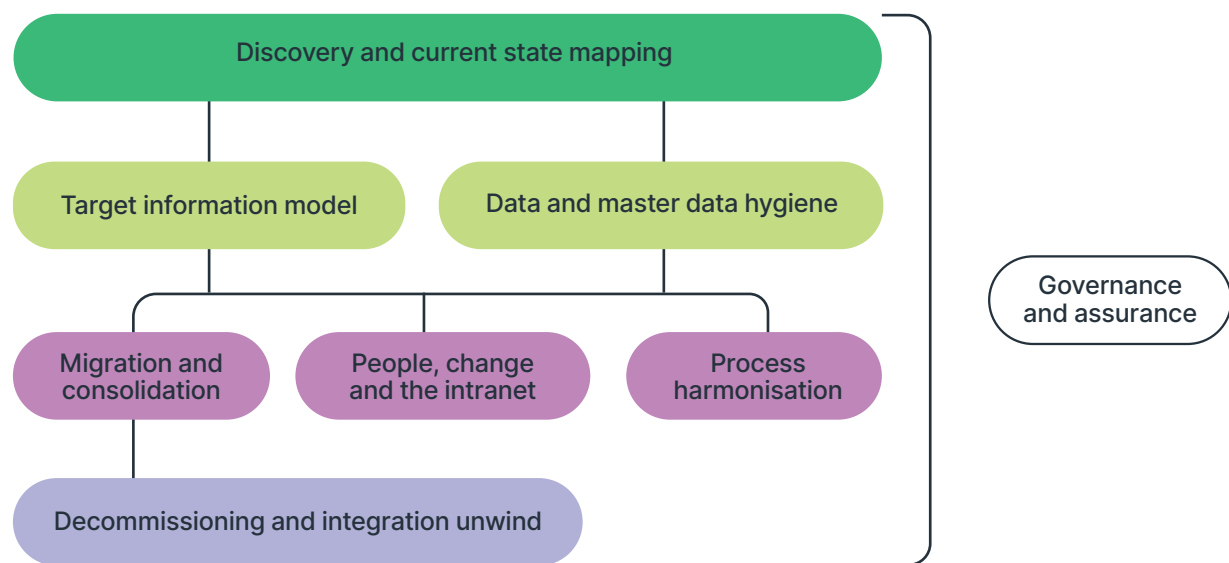


7. Stay audit ready

Keep it defensible. Every move of a record must stand up to audit, to privacy law, and to the Public Records Act.

Blueprint Workstreams

The work starts with Discovery and current state mapping. Once the content is mapped and understood, the target information model and data sets can be defined. Migration, intranet and process harmonisation then happen concurrently. Once implementation is complete, systems can be decommissioned, often resulting in cost savings. Governance and assurance runs throughout the programme.



Workstream 1: Discovery & Current State Mapping

“Find it before
you fix it.”

What it delivers: A complete picture of everything across the merging councils – every system, repository, integration, contract and dataset – with owners, dependencies and risks flagged.

Why it matters: You can’t plan what you haven’t found. Early discovery surfaces hidden links before they break something, keeps important records safe, and gives every later workstream a solid evidence base. In short, the things that would have bitten you later surface now, while there is still time to plan for them. This ensures that the new council’s plan is built on facts, not guesswork.

Workstream 2: Target Information Model

“One set of rules for
one new council.”

What it delivers: A single unified way to structure and govern information – including one common classification scheme, retention & disposal schedule, metadata standards, and security model.

Why it matters: This sets the rules of the road before moving anything. A coherent target model prevents simply “lifting and shifting” old fragmentation into the new council by deciding what good looks like in advance.

Workstream 3: Data & Master Data Hygiene

“One source of truth
for core data.”

What it delivers: Clean, unified core datasets for the new council – e.g. a single agreed set of people, property, ratepayer, asset and location records.

Why it matters: If the new council's basic data (addresses, property IDs and the like) doesn't line up, processes will falter and records will conflict. Establishing one authoritative source for each key data domain – and reconciling duplicates or inconsistencies at the source – ensures that every application, integration and record runs on the same reliable facts from Day 1.

Workstream 4: Migration & Consolidation

“Move what matters,
safely and deliberately.”

What it delivers: A structured approach to consolidating content and repositories into a single, well-governed environment. Content is prioritised based on value, risk, and operational need, ensuring that critical information is available and usable from Day 1, with additional consolidation and quality uplift completed in a controlled manner over time.

The approach, sequencing, and tooling are tailored to the scale and complexity of the merger, rather than applying a fixed method.

Why it matters: Poorly managed consolidation can introduce significant risk – including loss of critical records, broken processes, and unnecessary cost.

A deliberate approach ensures that:

- the information staff rely on is available and trustworthy from the outset
- unnecessary or low-value content does not create additional cost or complexity
- integrations, workflows, and dependencies are handled safely

This ensures the new council can operate confidently from Day 1, while allowing the broader consolidation effort to proceed in a way that is proportionate and controlled.

Delivery may take different forms depending on context, including staged, prioritised, or incremental approaches – defined as part of the detailed roadmap.

Workstream 5: Decommissioning & Integration Unwind

“Safely switch off
the old stuff.”

What it delivers: A complete integration dependency map and a safe, stepwise plan to retire or replace each legacy system and interface.

Why it matters: Simply flipping the off-switch on old systems can break connected processes if hidden dependencies aren't handled. This workstream analyses every interface between systems (even informal or patchwork links) and carefully sequences system retirements so nothing breaks unexpectedly. We ensure fallback options are ready for each cutover and that no critical service stops when the new council goes live.

This means that legacy systems can be retired on schedule, cutting unnecessary costs and complexity.

Workstream 6: People, Change & the Intranet

“One team, one place
to work together.”

This workstream ensures people can work confidently through the merger, not just navigate new systems. It delivers a single intranet as the clear “home” for the new council, backed by structured change support so staff always know where to go, how to work together, and what has changed. This reduces change fatigue, prevents fragmentation, and supports a consistent experience for both staff and residents from Day 1.

What it delivers: A single modern intranet platform, plus a structured adoption support programme, to unite staff. The new intranet becomes the central hub of the merged council’s information – a visible symbol of one organisation – with clear guidance so everyone knows where to find what they need and how to work together in the new environment.

Why it matters: Council leaders worry about their people – you can’t bring councils together if their people still work apart. Staff need to feel confident operating in the new council, not just left to figure out a new system. This workstream supports them through the transition with clear communications, training aligned to each phase of change, and local champions who guide their colleagues – ensuring no one is left behind. By making the new intranet the go-to “front door” for daily work, staff can leave old ways behind, reducing confusion and change fatigue. This directly benefits your customers – when staff have one source of truth and feel supported, residents experience seamless, consistent service from a council that truly acts as one joined-up organisation.

What Workstream 6 looks like in practice

Council leaders consistently rank staff support and communication as top concerns during mergers. This workstream is dedicated to helping people adapt confidently to the new organisation. We deliver a refreshed intranet that becomes the central hub for all staff – a single, trusted “home” aligned to the new council’s identity and ways of working.

But an intranet alone isn’t enough. We wrap it in a structured change support programme, combining early and frequent communication, active change champions from each council, and training timed to each stage of the rollout. This means staff learn new tools and practices when they need them – not months too early or after frustration has set in.

By unifying information access and providing hands-on support, staff feel looked after through the transition. Change fatigue is reduced, old system workarounds fall away, and confidence builds. This directly protects the customer experience: when staff know where to find information and how to work as one organisation, residents experience a consistent, joined-up service rather than confusion or delay. Workstream 6 ensures the human side of the merger works smoothly, so the technology and process changes can deliver their full value.

Workstream 7: Process Harmonisation

“Redesign key services end-to-end.”

What it delivers: A common way of working for the most important cross-council processes – for example, one unified method for handling building consents, LIMs, customer requests, rates, official information requests, and so on.

Why it matters: Merging councils must present a consistent face to citizens and staff. By focusing first on the highest-volume services, we eliminate conflicting procedures and design a single best-practice workflow for each area. This means staff and customers have clarity and consistency from Day 1 – no more confusion about which path to follow or duplicate processes behind the scenes. Everyone uses one agreed process for each service, resulting in seamless service delivery and one unified record of each outcome.



Workstream 8: Governance & Assurance

“Steer the ship and stay compliant.”

What it delivers: Strong oversight and clear decision-making authority for the whole programme. This includes a defined governance framework, roles and responsibilities, and built-in checks and audit trails for every content move.

Why it matters: Without active governance, decisions drift and compliance can slip. This workstream ensures nothing falls through the cracks – every key decision is authorised and documented, and Public Records Act and Privacy Act obligations are met at each step. Robust governance provides guardrails so the programme stays on track and fully defensible under audit or scrutiny.

Scaling for Variance

A merger of three rural councils is different in scale and needs from a metropolitan one. Fit-for-purpose sizing is essential.

THEME	SMALL/RURAL	LARGER/URBAN
Governance	Lean: one lead, a small team, light cadence.	Formal programme office with workstream leads and assurance.
Discovery	Weeks. Fewer systems, but often more file shares and ad hoc stores.	Months. Many systems, deep integration webs, large volumes.
Migration	Fewer waves, higher manual effort acceptable.	Many waves, automation and tooling essential.
Intranet	A single clear new destination is quick to stand up and high impact.	Phased rollout with strong local champions across sites.
Risk Profile	Capacity and key person risk dominate.	Integration complexity and continuity risk dominate.

Risks

Below are the most common risks we have encountered across migration, integration and consolidation.

RISK	DESCRIPTION	MITIGANT	IL VALUE
Undocumented integrations	A vital system is turned off, unknowingly breaking a finance, HR, or public service process that relied on it.	Map every dependency early in the Discovery workstream; retire systems in a safe sequence with contingency plans for each cutover.	We bring proven integration mapping tools and expertise – including our Smart Integration platform, which already connects to TechnologyOne OneCouncil, Datascape, MagiQ and others. This greatly reduces the chance of missing a hidden link. Every interface is documented and accounted for ahead of time, so no critical process fails when a legacy system is decommissioned.
Lift and shift the mess	If you simply migrate everything as-is, you reconstruct old fragmentation and inefficiencies in the new council, losing the chance to improve.	Lock in a unified target information model first, and lift content quality as you move it (so each item arrives better organised than it left).	We have deep expertise in content migration with quality uplift. Our approach always starts by agreeing “what good looks like” – a consistent taxonomy, metadata, and retention model – before migrating content. We also use automation and metadata enrichment to ensure content isn’t just copied, but arrives in the new environment cleansed, classified, and compliant (rather than dragging the mess along).
Master data drift	Conflicting records for people, properties or assets could lead to inaccurate data in new systems.	Establish authoritative data sources early and resolve duplicates at the source before migration.	We know that clean master data is the backbone of everything else. Our plan has a dedicated Data Hygiene workstream to unify core datasets (with a mix of human expertise and data-matching tools/AI for high volumes). This means the new council starts with one reliable set of names, addresses, and reference data, so services and information line up across the board.

RISK	DESCRIPTION	MITIGANT	IL VALUE
Access creep	Old permissions carry over by accident, leading to overly broad access – potentially exposing sensitive content after roles change.	Rebuild the access model deliberately and reset permissions as part of each migration wave.	Our approach treats security and access as a fundamental design element, not an afterthought. In practice, we take the time to redesign the new council's permissions model cleanly (who should see what) and then enforce it during each content migration wave. We double-check that only the right people retain access to information, reducing the risk of inadvertent exposure of confidential information.
People left behind	Some staff might stick to old systems or processes, fragmenting the work and undermining the merger.	Treat the intranet and change support as core deliverables, not optional extras – with champions and timed training ensuring everyone transitions to the new ways of working.	We deeply understand the human side of change. Our blueprint bakes in a comprehensive adoption programme – communications, champions, and on-demand help – to actively bring every person on the journey. By making the new intranet the easiest place to work, and giving people guidance at just the right time, we ensure no one is left floundering or reverting to old habits.
Information exposure	If compliance considerations (Public Records Act, LGOIMA, Privacy Act) are neglected, the merged council could face legal or audit exposure over mishandled records.	Embed Public Records Act, LGOIMA and Privacy Act checkpoints into every workstream and document every record move.	Regulatory compliance is one of our core strengths – our approach is explicitly designed to meet NZ public sector obligations. We ensure every step is audit-ready by design. Throughout migration we keep a full decision log and audit trail. This means that at the end of the programme, council leaders and regulators can see exactly how every record was handled.

Appendix A: Workstream detail

Workstream 1: Discovery and current state mapping

Build a picture of what exists before you design anything.

Activities

Set scope and criteria

Decide what counts as material and what can wait, based on significance, risk, volume, users, links and sensitivity.

Log the thresholds.

Inventory each repository

List each repository with owner, volume, formats, links, contracts and sensitivity for each.

Map the links

Show how the systems connect with each other and what breaks if one stops. This is where the hidden links surface.

Profile quality and risk

Rate the amount/location of duplication, ROT, weak metadata and sensitive content. Sample the big stores to find the hot spots.

Capture the rules

Gather each council's taxonomy, retention schedules, and policies, noting where they differ.

Report and share

Flag priorities and open questions, and make available to the other workstreams.

Outputs

Inventory register

Dependency map of the links

Risk and priority heat map

Decision and assumptions log

Owner

Programme lead, with IT and Information Management

Success looks like

Nothing material missed, so no late surprises.

Leaders share the picture of scale, complexity and risk.

Services keep running, and Public Records Act and Privacy Act duties hold throughout.

Scaling**Small**

Mostly manual (interviews, walkthroughs), fewer formal systems but more informal stores; watch key-person risk

Large

Many systems, deep integrations and large volumes of content. Scanning and discovery tooling are required to scope the effort.

Workstream 2: Target information model

Determine what good looks like before any changes are made.

Activities

Agree a classification scheme and retention and disposal schedule

Consolidate all councils' categories and retention rules into one approved structure.

Set one metadata model

Standardise key fields and terms so content is described consistently.

Design one security and access model for the new council

Define a unified approach to permissions and confidentiality.

Reconcile differences

Map old taxonomies, metadata, and access schemes to the new model, adjusting for any gaps or unique needs.

Outputs

Unified classification & disposal framework

Standard metadata schema

Single security and access model

Owner

Information Management Lead

Success looks like

One signed-off information model that covers every content type.

All incoming content has an obvious "home" in the new classification.

No critical records left stranded in legacy structures.

Scaling

Small

Choose the best existing scheme as a base and adjust it.

Large

We design the new information model collaboratively with input from across the merging organisations, and introduce it in manageable phases.

Workstream 3: Data and master data hygiene

Fix the data that processes rely on.

Activities

Identify trusted sources

Confirm which existing system holds the “source of truth” for each key data domain (people, property, ratepayers, assets, locations).

Find duplicates and conflicts

Pinpoint overlapping or inconsistent records across councils.

Clarify ownership

Assign responsibility for each master dataset going forward.

Resolve discrepancies

Reconcile conflicting records and eliminate duplicates at the source before migrating data or linking systems.

Outputs

Clean, merged master lists for core data (people, property, ratepayer, asset, location).

Owner

Data lead(s) working with business domain owners (e.g. Rates, Assets, GIS, HR)

Success looks like

One agreed record per person, property, etc., used by all systems.

No critical process is hampered by missing or mismatched data.

Staff trust the accuracy of key data on Day 1.

Scaling

Small

Manual reconciliation of a few thousand records is feasible.

Large

Use data-matching tools and/or AI alongside human for high-volume, critical data sets.

Workstream 4: Migration and consolidation

Focus on what matters, and consolidate and migrate safely.

Activities

Define migration strategy and constraints

Establish the approach based on scale, system complexity, integration dependencies, regulatory requirements, and operational priorities.

Audit and classify

Evaluate and label legacy content by significance, risk, usage, and sensitivity to decide what must move now and what can wait.

Sequence and prioritise the migration

Define the order and grouping of content movement based on value, risk, dependencies, and operational need.

This may involve staged, prioritised, or incremental approaches depending on context, with quality, metadata, and permissions improved as content is consolidated.

Validate each migration step

Reconcile content, versions, and access rights at each stage to ensure accuracy, completeness, and continuity before expanding further.

Maintain continuity and fallback access

Ensure legacy systems or fallback access remain available as needed until new environments are proven, supporting business continuity and audit requirements.

Outputs

Strategic migration plan

Consolidated content repository

Owner

Migration and Consolidation Lead, with system owners and IT support

Success looks like

All high-value content is in place and accessible from Day 1.

No vital information is lost or misplaced; no operational surprises after cutover.

All moves are logged and defensible for Public Records Act and audit requirements.

The migration approach is proportionate to the scale and complexity of the environment, with no unnecessary effort or risk introduced.

Scaling

Small

Simpler environments with fewer systems may allow more direct consolidation approaches, with proportionate tooling and manual effort.

Large

Complex environments require more structured sequencing, automation, and tooling to manage scale, dependencies, and risk.

Workstream 5: Decommissioning and integration unwind

Understand touch points and retire or reconnect integrations as appropriate.

Activities	Map integrations Document every interface between systems, using discovery findings and local knowledge to capture even informal and hidden links. Note: Information Leadership’s Smart Integration platform already connects to TechnologyOne OneCouncil, Datascape, MagiQ and others.
	Sequence retirements Plan the order to shut down or replace legacy systems and interfaces so that dependent processes continue to work throughout.
	Plan fallbacks Prepare a backup or manual workaround for each critical integration to cover any unexpected failures during cutover.
	Retire legacy systems Decommission each outdated platform once its data is migrated or replaced, ensuring any required information remains accessible (for audit or legal compliance).
Outputs	Integration dependency map
	Legacy system retirement sequence
Owner	IT Lead, with application owners
Success looks like	Every interface and dependency is accounted for ahead of system shutdowns.
	No critical process fails due to integration errors or omissions.
	Obsolete systems are retired on schedule, cutting cost and complexity.
Scaling	Small Fewer integrated systems and simpler dependencies; manual tracking and close coordination can suffice.
	Large Many interlinked applications requiring formal integration management, testing environments, and potentially interim bridging solutions to maintain continuity.

Workstream 6: People, change and the intranet

Support the change through clarity on identity, ways of working and active adoption support.

Activities

Establish the intranet as the default staff entry point:

Stand up a single intranet that clearly shows where key information lives and how staff work in the new council.

Provide clear, timely change communications

Use consistent messaging to answer “what’s changed” and “where do I go now” as the process progresses.

Deliver just-in-time support and training

Provide training, quick guidance, and at-desk support aligned to each change, rather than front loading activity.

Use local champions to support adoption

Embed champions across teams to support colleagues and reinforce new ways of working.

Outputs

New or updated intranet

Adoption support programme (communications, champions and training)

Champion network established

Owner

Change Lead, working closely with Communications and Information Management

Success looks like

Staff use the new intranet as their default starting point.

Staff report confidence in where to find information.

Legacy workarounds and parallel systems fall away.

Scaling

Small

A single intranet rollout with lightweight support.

Large

Phased rollout with champions embedded across teams and locations.

Workstream 7: Process harmonisation

Make the work flow across the new council, not down old council lines.

Activities	Prioritise high-volume processes: Identify the most critical cross-council services (e.g. building consents, LIMs, service requests) and tackle those first.
	Design one unified flow Bring together process owners to map a single future-state workflow for each priority area that everyone will follow.
	Put process before system Ensure new processes drive system configuration and content structures (not the other way around) so technology supports how work should flow.
Outputs	Unified process maps (for each priority service)
	Clear standard operating procedures
Owner	Relevant service leads (for each process), coordinated by the Transformation Programme
Success looks like	Staff and customers follow one agreed path for each service.
	No contradictory process steps remain.
	Every request has one joined-up record and nothing is lost in handovers.
Scaling	Small Only a handful of processes to align; simpler differences, so quicker to standardise.
	Large Many diverse processes across departments; formal process re-engineering and broad stakeholder input required to ensure buy in.

Workstream 8: Governance and assurance

Keep it on track and keep it compliant.

Activities

Empower a single accountable owner

Put one senior owner in charge with clear decision rights, supported by a small, capable core team.

Embed compliance oversight

Keep Public Records Act and Privacy Act assurance close to every decision and record key decisions as they are made.

Reset access deliberately

Rebuild the access model with intent, and review permissions progressively as new environments are established to prevent legacy access issues.

Outputs

Governance framework

Decision log

Audit trail

Owner

Chief Executive, with an executive sponsor for Public Records Act compliance

Success looks like

Every key decision is properly authorised and documented, so nothing falls between the cracks.

Public Records Act and Privacy Act obligations are upheld at all times.

External audits find the new council's information governance sound and comprehensive.

Scaling

Small

Lean approach with one lead, a minimal team, and a light oversight cadence; watch for over-reliance on informal processes.

Large

Formal programme office with workstream leads and dedicated assurance, using robust governance boards; watch for heavy bureaucracy slowing decisions.

We have done this before

New Zealand councils, decades of records, migration, integration and everything in between. The case studies are at informationleadership.com

When you are
ready to talk

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About Information Leadership

Reliable information powers reliable outcomes. That's why for over 20 years we've helped organisations turn Microsoft 365 into a place people trust. We guide government agencies, councils, iwi organisations and private enterprises to work with structure, safety, and confidence.

As a Microsoft AI Cloud, Modern Work, and Change & Adoption Partner, we extend M365 with proven iWorkplace™ solutions and frameworks and people-first delivery.

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