

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS FRAMEWORK FOR STATISTICAL INSTITUTIONS

PHASE II – STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

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STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

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Introduction

Recognizing the importance of strategic communication, the High-level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics endorsed a two-year priority project – the Strategic Communications Framework for Statistical Institutions. The project is intended to complement the “Recommendations for Promoting, Measuring and Communicating the Value of Official Statistics”¹ and supports the “Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.”²

Phase I of the project, completed in 2018 and endorsed by the Conference of European Statisticians in June 2019, resulted in the production of the “Strategic Communications Framework for Statistical Institutions – Phase I”. The purpose of the framework is to guide statistical offices in the development of a strategic approach to protect, enhance and promote the organization’s reputation and brand. Phase I is intended to help statistical organizations maximize their corporate image through proactive user consultation; engagement with and understanding of target audiences; channels, tools and approaches designed to meet particular audiences’ needs; messages tailored to various audiences; media engagement; and measurement of the results and impact of communication activities. Phase I of the framework also includes proposed skill sets to support a professional external communications program, a communication maturity model and roadmap and guidelines to create a proactive response strategy to issues that have the potential to cause reputational damage.

Within the context of today’s ever-changing data environment, many statistical organizations are in the process of developing or reviewing their strategic objectives and their business models – leading to the articulation or a review of their mission and/or vision statements. More and more statistical organizations are involved in government-wide data strategy formulation. For statistical organizations to become strategic partners in the development of a national data strategy and for the successful development of a solid business model or the transition to a new one, the vision must resonate with staff at all levels. Employees become more invested and engaged when they understand and support mission and vision statements of their organizations.

Phase II of the Strategic Communication Framework Project builds on the experience and momentum gained in Phase I and focuses on the development of guidelines and strategic approaches to internal communications; the value of and ways to engage staff so that they can become ambassadors of the organization’s key messages to external partners and stakeholders; and the development of stakeholder engagement strategies. It also explores, from a communications perspective, statistical organizations’ involvement in the development of national data strategies.

This document, one of two outputs of Phase II, focuses on stakeholder engagement and critical considerations for statistical institutions embarking on national data strategies.

As with Phase I of the Project, all the components of this framework are offered as a guideline and are not intended to be prescriptive. Statistical institutions are invited to use the two phases of the framework in their entirety, or to use only those elements that help support their business needs.

¹ Recommendations for Promoting, Measuring and Communicating the Value of Official Statistics, <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=51139>

² Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, <http://www.unece.org/?id=3207>

Chapter 1: What is stakeholder engagement?

1.1 The importance of strategic engagement

Stakeholders are some of the National Statistical Institution's (NSI) most valuable assets in ensuring the effective delivery of the corporate strategy, the imparting of messages and a high-performing national statistical system.

Harnessed correctly at a strategic – rather than transactional – level, stakeholders can be instrumental in helping an NSI inform decision making, support democratic debate and improve the communication and understanding of the role data play in the effective operation of a country. Working with communications can also aid the development of an early warning system that proactively uses stakeholder intelligence to mitigate risks and capitalise on opportunities.

There are also tangible benefits, as effective engagement with stakeholders encourages advocacy and elicits trust at all levels through the imparting of bespoke messages and the ongoing demonstration of value. Communication assets, such as a corporate narrative, can be helpful in achieving this, and it should emphasize the role of an NSI in being helpful to the policy making agenda and providing statistics to meet user needs. This then needs to be weaved into all that an NSI says and does.

It is important that stakeholder engagement activity is built into an NSI's business planning process and timetable as this will help ensure that stakeholder needs are at the heart of its business and that priority issues can be identified as part of an annual period of review. Engagement with stakeholders and staff can also make its way into the business plan, further supporting an integrated approach and enhanced corporate communication.

The level at which these engagements takes place must also be considered and it must be recognized that it is often the case, statisticians speak best to other statisticians while methodologists may speak best to other methodologists; this should be wholly encouraged as effective engagement is not about channeling interactions through one person.

1.2 The role and value-added of communications in professionalizing approaches

It is the role of communications to ensure that value is always added in these relationships and a focus on objectives remains, as it cannot simply become an information trade between those within the same profession. In difficult times, communications can ensure that essential information and interventions are staged in a constructive way and continue to deliver change while building and maintaining trust.

With this considered, communication has a unique role to play in ensuring an NSI's effective stakeholder engagement. While the utmost focus needs to always remain on the organization's overall objectives, it is vital that communication teams have specific communication objectives that respect the team's strengths and weaknesses.

The objectives could be high level, like developing and maintaining two-way and trusted relationships at the highest levels of government, or more focused, in areas such as:

- Identification of priority issues or the identification of individuals with a stake in an issue and mapping their interests and influence in policy making and scrutinizing.
- Identification of the fora an NSI needs to be in, the tables at which it should sit, the conferences that need to be addressed, events to organize, and networks to participate in.
- Identification of other channels for increasing the reach, e.g. the media, social media and stakeholder media.
- Identification of the key players – the people with the most appropriate knowledge and contacts - and partnering with those who can best engage with and influence these individuals.
- Development of the capability of these key players so they have the listening, communication, digital, political and presentation skills to engage effectively.
- Development and implementation of contact programmes on the key issues.
- Support for the contact programmes with a narrative, briefing and presentation materials.
- Monitoring the contact programmes for quality and frequency of interaction and for ‘movement’ of stakeholder position.

Treating relationships as accounts

Communications cannot and should not own every relationship that an NSI has. A common model for managing relationships is to treat relationships as ‘accounts’, with account holders (such as chief statisticians, directors, etc.) being supported by communications to manage their relationships effectively, consequently leading to more robust and value-added relationships.

These accounts should cover all significant stakeholder organizations and focus on building relationships with the senior policy makers and influencers in each organization.

Communication teams play a pivotal role in defining and shaping the expectations of these accounts and can work closely with the account holders to undertake thorough mapping exercises of priority accounts, to identify who will support relationships, and to provide detailed recommendations on how relationships will work in practice.

This support will allow key account holders to oversee the relationship at the highest level and to focus on strategy, co-ordination and problem-solving where needed. Communications can also consider providing customized external affairs and stakeholder management training for all primary account holders to help develop their skills to manage their accounts confidently and effectively.

Communications can also provide strategic support and response to emerging issues. In addition to providing individualized ongoing support and advice to key account holders, issues that require action can be identified and rapidly raised via an early warning system. The strategic management of accounts and monitoring of the state of the relationship can be conducted through quarterly reviews with the primary and key account holders and relevant parties.

Once relationships are established, they can also become new insight channels and provide the vital intelligence to inform decision making. This will complement the account holders’ strategic focus and identify issues of concern and presenting opportunities, with insights and action areas being shared as part of ongoing account management.

1.3 The differences between stakeholders, users and audience

Understanding the difference between stakeholders, users and your audience can help the NSI better identify what it hopes to achieve in communication terms when working with each community.

The following definitions may prove helpful to define the three groups:

Stakeholders are primarily those with an interest in the NSI's business. They can be individuals, groups or organizations that are affected by the activity of the business, as well as providers of its data.

User is typically used to define a person or organization that is in receipt of a service. For example, accessing an NSI's website to acquire data or using a service to apply for a passport. When researching users, it can be helpful to understand who they are and what they're trying to do; how they currently do it (for example, what services or channels they use); the problems or frustrations they experience and what they need from your service to achieve their goal.

Audience is more typically used with communications, as it defines who is at the receiving end of the communication. This could be a particular user group (for example: applicants to a particular service) or a specific set of stakeholders (for example: charity groups). It could, however, be even more broad, such as the public.

Chapter 2: Stakeholder mapping

2.1 Stakeholder mapping and its importance to an NSI

Stakeholder mapping is the visualization of those with whom a relationship needs to be developed or maintained to help the NSI achieve its goals. It is the identification of all stakeholder groups, determining their position and roles, and their impact on the external environment. It organizes the structure of the relationship with the external environment and describes who and at what level in the NSI should be involved in the contact with the stakeholder or stakeholder group.

A properly developed map of stakeholders facilitates and shortens the process of planning communication with these groups. It shows what actions should be taken to maintain a proper relationship between NSI and stakeholders and eliminates the risk of inappropriate communications or actions.

2.2 How to map effectively

Stakeholder mapping begins with identifying all stakeholders with whom the NSI has contact and a relationship. These can be both institutions and individuals.

It is important for the list of stakeholders to include all those with whom an NSI has built or wants to build relationships – including key politicians using data or well-known academics, analysts and journalists. The institutions or people with whom relationships are difficult to maintain should also be included as they form a core part of an NSI's challenge.

The list of stakeholders should be reviewed at least once a year to make sure that it correctly reflects the external environment and to ensure that an NSI can continue to have the required influence.

2.3 Determining the importance of stakeholders

Using the list of stakeholders created, it is necessary to define their importance in building an NSI's relations with the external environment and in achieving the NSI's goals.

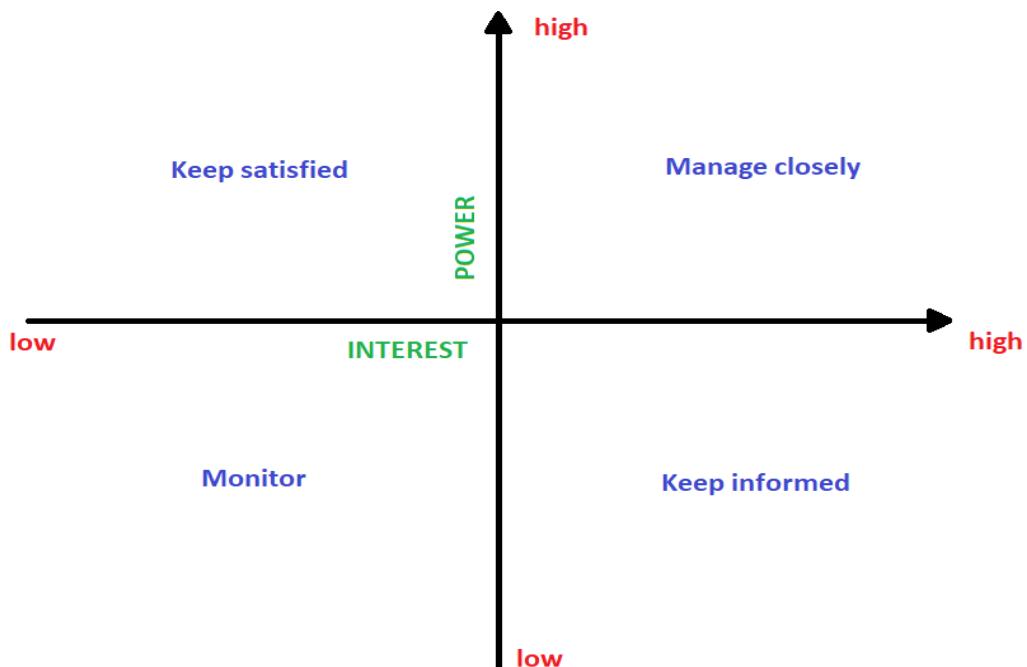
To assist with identifying stakeholders and defining their relationship to the NSI, the following questions can help:

- How important is the relationship?
- What role does it fulfill (i.e. data providers, users)?
- What is the impact on the external environment (opinion forming)?
- What is the range of impact (nationwide/local/isolated in a specific environment)?
- What is the financial dependency (private company, government unit etc.)?
- Who does the NSI work with?
- Does it involve politics?
- What is the stakeholder's opinion in the external environment?
- Who can NSI influence through this stakeholder and how?

Properly asked, these questions will allow an NSI to describe in detail the position and role of the stakeholder in the external environment and what it wants to influence or where a relationship is absent and needs to be built.

This information can then be used to help map stakeholders effectively. A common mapping method is the Boston Matrix (see Figure 1 below). Using this approach, the importance of stakeholder groups is determined by how much interest they have in official statistics (interest) and how much influence/impact they have on the environment (power).

Figure 1. Mapping the importance of stakeholders using the Boston Matrix



This figure shows the most important category as "manage closely". These are the stakeholders who are most important to an NSI's business and the ones who can have the greatest impact on the external environment. This is the group the NSI should establish the closest possible relationships with and devote the most attention to.

The second most important category is occupied by two groups simultaneously: keep informed and keep satisfied. The difference between these groups is due to their location on the graph. "Keep satisfied" is a group that has a large impact on the environment but is hardly interested in NSI activities (e.g. court, judges) whereas "Keep informed" is a group that has a low impact on the environment but is very interested in an NSI's activities.

The final, and third, category is the group of stakeholders that should be monitored to ensure their interest or power doesn't fluctuate, but no major energy needs to be exerted in their management.

2.4 Turning intelligence into action and maintaining the relationship

After grouping stakeholders, the next step is to define the activities required to reach them and determining who within the NSI should be responsible for managing the relationship and their level in the hierarchy. These activities can include, but are not limited to:

- Publications, such as a magazine or newsletter that is circulated on regular basis;
- Dedicated channels (i.e. closed groups on social networks, special profiles on social media, tailored messages on LinkedIn etc.);
- Frequent contact through formal or informal meetings;
- Identifying a key account contact who works exclusively with a stakeholder;
- Special events (councils, briefings, conferences with networking etc.); and
- Tailored information for and from the stakeholders.

To determine the level of relationship management, and the seniority required, it can be helpful to categorize the nature of the engagement. For example:

- **Strategic** relationships would typically be conducted by the management of the NSI. Strategic activities are often those involving meetings with the management of government institutions, representing the NSI at international and national meetings, or the participation in high profile meetings with stakeholders.
- **Operational** relationships should be carried out by the experts (for example: statisticians) with the support of a communication team if necessary. These are mostly bilateral relationships with their counterparts in other institutions. Activities here often include participation in briefings to provide substantive explanations, running working groups with stakeholders, and participation with stakeholders on topics of expert specialization.

In addition, there are also the relationships that are owned by the communication team. These will often be a hybrid of strategic and operational relationships and form the foundation for future stakeholder relationships to be developed.

Typically, communication will focus on ensuring there is an ongoing provision of information for stakeholder groups through monitoring the activities and ensuring the flow of information and contacts between stakeholders and experts. The goal with all activities is to ensure that there is robust and transparent relationship management within an NSI. This is crucial to the success of any stakeholder engagement programme, particularly as specific team members will often be dealing with different stakeholder contacts.

Chapter 3: Developing a stakeholder plan

A stakeholder plan is a fundamental part of any communications strategy, regardless of whether the strategy relates to the overall communications of an organization or to specific initiatives, such as the introduction of a new service or product, or crisis management.

Every communications strategy requires a stakeholder plan that is tailored to the key audiences that have an impact on the success or failure of the communications strategy objectives.

The stakeholder plan is effectively the roadmap for delivering messages to stakeholders and is the foundation for achieving stakeholder buy-in for the communications strategy's objectives.

An effective stakeholder plan needs to consider the following questions:

- What are the strategic reasons for consulting with stakeholders?
- With whom do we need to communicate?
- What are the priority issues?
- What types of influence do various stakeholders have?
- What will be the most effective means of communicating/engaging with stakeholders?
- When and how often do we need to communicate with stakeholders?
- Are there opportunities to collaborate to ensure key messages are consistent and avoid consultation fatigue?
- How will the results be captured, tracked and evaluated?

The following steps outline how a stakeholder plan is developed:

Step 1 - Context analysis

The first step in the development of a stakeholder plan is to perform a context analysis using a tool, such as a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), to evaluate the current challenges associated with the communications strategy's objectives, with a focus on stakeholder-related issues.

Depending on the nature of the communications challenge, some or all of the following steps might be considered:

- Analysis of existing information readily available e.g. internal documentation, media coverage etc...
- Interviews with business areas within the organization
- Interviews with senior management
- Brainstorming with the communications team
- Surveys and focus groups.

In most cases, an analysis of this kind will have been undertaken as part of the development of the overall communications strategy. Even if this is the case, it is important to revisit this exercise in the context of stakeholder engagement.

Step 2 - Identifying and evaluating stakeholders

In developing a stakeholder plan, it is vital to identify all the stakeholders related to the relevant communications strategy objectives:

- Which stakeholders are supporters and which are potential detractors?
- Who are the stakeholders who have the most influence on this communications initiative?
- Which stakeholders will be most affected by this communications initiative?
- What are the top motivations and interests of these stakeholders and what is their driving force, e.g. financial interest, emotional interest, competitive interest etc.?
- Can some of these stakeholders be grouped in terms of their common needs?

When conducting this identification and evaluation stage it is important to be thorough because it is easy to underestimate the ability of a minor stakeholder to derail a communications strategy if they are not communicated with adequately or appropriately.

Step 3 - Defining stakeholder objectives

In considering what individual stakeholder objectives should be, it is important to consider how their interests overlap with the overall objectives of the communications strategy. In this regard it is important to consider:

- What is their ability to stop the organization achieving its communications objectives?
- Where does stakeholder power derive from, and how can it be controlled or channeled?
- What are the stakeholders' business goals and how do these interfere with what the organization is trying to achieve?

By considering these types of questions, individual objectives for each stakeholder or stakeholder grouping can be defined, all of which should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-focused).

Step 4 - Tailoring communications

Having defined the communications objectives for individual stakeholders or stakeholder groups, the next step is to consider what action or actions must be taken to enable the organization to deliver on its overall communications objectives.

This process involves defining what key messages must be developed for each stakeholder or stakeholder group and the most appropriate tools (e.g. newsletter, email, etc.), channels (e.g. website, social media etc.) or platforms (press conference, one-to-one briefing etc.) needed to deliver the messages effectively.

Step 5 - Timing

It is important to plan and time the steps of the stakeholder management plan carefully as certain stakeholder workstreams may need to be prioritized above others to successfully achieve the communications strategy objectives.

To this end, a timing strategy should be built, based on knowledge, research and available resources.

Step 6 - Engagement plan template

A simple planning tool, such as the one outlined below, can be used to record the stakeholder plan.

Stakeholder	Title / Role	Interest: How much does this issue / initiative affect them (1,2,3)	How much influence do they have? (1,2,3)	Stakeholders objective (i.e. What does this plan need to achieve to deliver on the communications objective?)	Action required	Communications tool or channel, etc.	Timing

Chapter 4: Evaluating success

It is critically important to know that the actions taken with stakeholders have led to a tangible – and preferably measurable – improvement, as this allows success to be repeated and helps to demonstrate the return on investment that the communication function continues to deliver.

As with all communications, it is vital to evaluate activities throughout the course of the stakeholder engagement – it is not a task that is conducted exclusively at the end of a project. Through evaluation, an NSI can ensure it is meeting its objectives, targets and engaging with the right stakeholders to advance its strategy.

4.1 The art of evaluation

Determining the efficacy of stakeholder relationships can be an inexact science so, to overcome this, communications teams should consider using a complementary suite of quantitative and qualitative measures.

Quantitative metrics can be easily gathered using surveys and scoring mechanisms that allow benchmarks to be established and targets set. Other simple metrics to display are the number of stakeholders influenced, engagements surrounding social media activity, and the amount of media coverage that contained a stakeholder's quote.

These should then be supplemented with the elements that simply cannot be presented in a dashboard or chart, for example the facets that cannot be counted, such as crises mitigated, goodwill extended and general advocacy. It is the communications team's responsibility to combine these measures into an evaluation that is actionable and allows future decisions to be made, using a solid evidence base. Wherever possible, there should be an explicit focus on the power of communications' interventions.

A common approach to presenting this information in a useful format is to use a supporting narrative. This should tell the story behind any data that has been achieved and be the vital context in understanding an outcome. The following questions can be used to inform this narrative's production:

- Did the NSI achieve what it wanted to – namely its primary objective – and can communications demonstrate that it met its objectives?
- What role did stakeholders have in helping to achieve this objective?
- Is there evidence of a better two-way dialogue with key stakeholders, consequently improving an NSI's ability to listen to external views and identify and mitigate risks to stakeholder support?
- Is better reputation measurement now available, allowing an NSI to track how it is performing with its planned engagements with stakeholders?
- Has the volume of engagements increased and why?
- Is there anecdotal evidence of improved support and advocacy? Do external organizations now know an NSI's story?
- Could better policy emerge because of early engagement with stakeholders and listening to their views?

- Is there feedback from stakeholders about what has worked well and what has been learned for future activities?

4.2 Lessons learned

Using this information, recommendations for effective relationship management in future can be made. Although every campaign is different, there are often similar points of failure and common requirements for future engagements. These can often include:

- Ensuring that there is a maintained database or contact sheet for all stakeholders involved in the project, especially if evidence suggests that not everyone was reached appropriately or at the right time.
- Nominating a relationship lead and/or a primary contact. This relationship lead should have overall responsibility for stakeholder activity and will be responsible for relationship building. This is especially important if feedback suggests stakeholders have struggled to find a *route in* to an NSI.
- Ensuring that stakeholder management is a regular agenda point and that updates are expected during routine reporting. Remember: evaluation is not simply a concluding activity.
- Installing a process to maximize good practice and rapidly resolve conflict.
- Running a culture change programme to remind all employees that stakeholder engagement is a constant, proactive part of an NSI's business and not just done in their free time.
- Determining which stakeholders need to be more actively involved than others.
- Increasing the transparency of feedback on progress with an NSI's plans. For example, if stakeholders were asked for feedback, it could be powerful to acknowledge their feedback and outline what an NSI is doing in response.

Chapter 5: Considerations for the successful public acceptance of a National Data Strategy

Governments, worldwide, are increasingly dependent on data. This data revolution is forcing governments to consider data as a strategic asset and is transforming the way governments collect, share and use data – fundamentally changing the way they make decisions and deliver services to their citizens. Many countries are developing government-wide strategies focused on the protection, use, management and sharing of data – with statistical organizations playing the critical role of data stewards.

The June 2019 Conference of European Statisticians featured a seminar on the Emerging role of national statistical offices as offices for statistics and data. The seminar focused on a discussion paper³ prepared by Estonia, with contributions from Canada, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland and the UNECE Secretariat. This paper has since been updated through the work of a task force led by Estonia, with contributions from Albania, Canada, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland and the UNECE Secretariat. The revised paper is entitled ‘Implementation of the New Role of National Statistical Offices at the Time of Expanded Possibilities’.

What has emerged from the initial international discussion on this topic is that different models are being adopted based on the country’s governmental, political and social landscape. Each has distinct strengths and challenges. The provision of clear guidance on communicating such strategies would be premature, as national interests and priorities differ.

However, it is understood that data strategies will need to pass the test of public scrutiny to be successful. Ratified and implemented correctly, they will enhance the reputation of an NSI and sustain public trust.

This chapter focuses on factors to be explored, **from a communications perspective**, as countries consider the adoption of national data strategies. In developing these considerations, the Strategic Communications Project reviewed the aforementioned discussion papers and all the papers submitted to the 2018 CES Bureau meeting⁴ as well as the June 2019 Conference of European Statisticians (<http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=48575>).

5.1 Value proposition

Defining the value proposition is the most important first step. An NSI must be able to clearly articulate the benefits of a national data strategy for citizens, as it is only through the understanding of these benefits that risks can be mitigated, and in some cases accepted.

A successful proposition will resonate with citizens by demonstrating its relevance to their daily lives: it should be about them, their needs and expressed in simple terms. For example, it could focus on how the strategy will help understand the cost of living or promote better healthcare.

³ The Role of National Statistical Systems in the New Data Ecosystem, CES meeting June 2019 <http://www.unece.org/index.php?id=48575>

⁴ http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/bur/2018/October/04-Redefining_national_statistical_systems.pdf

5.2 Data types, safeguarding and protection

A successful data strategy will bring together data from a variety of sources, including but not limited to:

- Administrative
- Survey
- Private and acquired (big data, etc.)

By nature, an NSI knows how to ethically manage, safeguard and protect data. These features must be built into a national data strategy from the outset and not applied at the end of the process or when data collection begins.

Communication teams must remain cognizant of this in everything that they do. For example, data on an individual's health or financial position will be much more sensitive than aggregated migration data. Likewise, information about businesses will be of commercial value and require the proper access levels.

5.3 Methodologies

A national data strategy will unite potentially disparate data sets, making coherency and consistency problematic. The NSI must articulate these differences, as otherwise citizens may be unable to correctly use the data, providing further challenges to perceptions and trust, consequently reducing the overall use of the data.

As an ongoing initiative, an NSI should work to impart the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics⁵ to providers to drive continuous improvement in the acquired datasets.

5.4 Privacy

A national data strategy increases the amount of data held exponentially, and this sheer amount of stored/linked data could raise citizens' concerns. As such, citizens must be assured that their privacy will always be protected and an NSI should promote its strong track record in doing so.

The use of a framework, such as the five safes that are used to help make decisions about the effective use of confidential data, should be considered as a foundation for communicating widely to reassure citizens.

5.5 Transparency

For trust to be gained and maintained, there must be complete transparency about the methods, processes and types of data held. This should include the necessary safeguards that are in place, as well as any recorded breaches or changes to what could be considered to be the public record.

An NSI often leads the way across government in this and, as part of a national data strategy, should seek to raise standards within the entire system.

5.6 Accountability

It is essential that the owner or partners of a national data strategy – who do not necessarily have to be the NSI – have clear accountability for the management, protection and design of the data

⁵ Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, <http://www.unece.org/?id=3207>

holdings. This should include escalation routes and clear points of contact for citizen questions or concerns.

Public trust can be further increased with the designation of an independent commissioner or ombudsman to represent citizens' rights and views, including the management of dispute resolution.

5.7 Social License

Social license is created and maintained slowly over time as the statistical institution, through its actions, builds trust with its stakeholders, users and the public in general. As the NSI considers this new business model, it must consider the impact of its established relationship with its community. It is no longer sufficient for an NSI to rely on its reputation. It must be transparent about the changes it is considering, be seen as operating responsibly with the data to which it has been entrusted, and take care of its employees and the environment.

When problems do occur, the NSI must be transparent with the public and move quickly and definitively to resolve the issue. Without such actions, the social license is at risk.

Conclusion

The considerations described above represent initial thoughts from a strategic communications perspective.

As countries embark on the design of their national data strategies, the communications team of the NSI should be engaged as a strategic partner. Communications are constantly monitoring the external environment (governmental, societal and political) and can help assess the public acceptability of different strategic models or proposals in order to provide professional advice that will ensure successful adoption and engagement.

Chapter 6: Summary and Conclusions

The High-level Group for the Modernization of Official Statistics has recognized that stakeholder engagement is a key component of an effective Strategic Communications Framework.

To succeed in the increasingly competitive data environment, statistical organizations must engage with the full range of their stakeholder community. To do so effectively, staff at all levels must understand and embrace the organization's mission and vision, and know with whom to engage and how to analyze the level, type and most effective engagement strategy to deploy.

No two national statistical institutions are identical in terms of their level of maturity and/or type of responsibilities. The social and political environment from within which they operate from country to country varies. However, across the globe, statistical organizations are increasingly understanding the importance of engagement and forming partnerships with those who use, provide and have a vested interest in data. In essence, national statistical institutions are becoming leaders or strategic players in the formation and nurturing of the national data ecosystems.

This work proposes a number of elements statistical organizations should consider to identify, understand, manage and nurture the range of stakeholder relations. The following summarizes the recommendations presented throughout the document.

Recommendations

1. Relationships should be regularly assessed. Harnessed correctly at a strategic (rather than transactional) level, stakeholders can be instrumental in helping an NSI inform decision making, support democratic debate and improve the communication and understanding of the role data play in the operation of a country.
2. Messages and narratives should be crafted and shared with partners. Effective stakeholder engagement encourages advocacy and elicits trust at all levels, through the sharing of information and the ongoing demonstration of value.
3. It is important that stakeholder engagement activities are built into the NSI's business planning process to ensure stakeholder needs are at the heart of business decisions. An annual review ensures that priority issues are identified and acted upon.
4. Communications cannot and should not own every relationship that an NSI has. Communications can provide strategic support and response to emerging issues as well as individualized and ongoing support and advice to key account holders.
5. Stakeholder mapping is an essential element for the effective maintenance of stakeholder relationships. It is the visualization of those with whom a relationship needs to be developed and maintained.
6. A properly developed map facilitates the process of planning communication and interaction with the stakeholder community and identifies each stakeholder group's importance. It also determines the level of relationship management, be it strategic or operational.
7. Evaluating the success of stakeholder relations should be a continuous process using both quantitative and qualitative measures.
8. Information gathered through evaluation should be used to form recommendations for improvement at a strategic or individual level.
9. As countries embark on the development of government-wide data strategies, it is understood that data strategies will need to pass the test of public scrutiny to be successful.

Appendix 1

Case Study: Australian Government Data Reforms 2015-2019: the evolving role of the Australian Bureau of Statistics

Topic

Collaboration across the Australian Government to ensure that the national data system can meet the emerging and future data and analytics needs facing the Australian Public Service.

Situational description

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is Australia's national statistical agency, providing trusted official statistics on a wide range of economic, social, population and environmental matters of importance to Australia. As an independent statutory authority, the ABS has a legislated function to be the central statistical authority for the Australian Government and to provide statistical services for the state and territory governments. In this capacity, the ABS has an important leadership role, to maximize the use of public data for statistical purposes, and to provide technical advice, develop standards and provide assistance to Australian and state/territory governments in relation to statistics.

The ABS is also the primary (but not only) Australian Government Accredited Integrating Authority (AIA) within the whole of the Australian Government reform initiative, the Data Integration Partnership for Australia (DIPA). In this role, the ABS plays a significant role in helping Government to maximize the use of public data and statistics to enable better informed government policy and service delivery. As an AIA, the ABS undertakes high-risk data linkage projects on behalf of data custodians across Governments and provides safe access to unidentified, integrated microdata to government and non-government researchers.

Over the last three years, the ABS has undertaken an increasing range and volume of work to support the evolution of the Australian National Data System.

Starting point

In partnership with Australian Government data custodian agencies, the ABS began developing a business longitudinal linked dataset in 2005 and a person-based integrated dataset in 2010. The person-based integrated asset and infrastructure was initially championed by the ABS and the Department of Health, before growing into a six-agency partnership project. Recognizing increasing interest in data by government, the ABS worked with its partners to test the feasibility of linking various cross-portfolio datasets longitudinally. However, access to these integrated microdata was limited to partner agencies for exploratory research purposes, and progress in developing integrated data methods and assets was slow without dedicated resourcing. Since 2017, the production and expansion of these assets has been further enabled by government funding for the DIPA initiative.

During this time, the Australian Government, in recognition of the growing need for enhanced management of public data, stated in its [Public Data Policy Statement](#) that data "is a strategic national resource that holds considerable value for growing the economy, improving service delivery and transforming policy outcomes for the nation". To leverage its data holdings, the Australian Government committed to:

- harnessing the value of data;
- publishing, linking and sharing data to stimulate innovation and create opportunities; and

- optimizing the use and reuse of public data.

In May 2017, the Productivity Commission released the report of its [Inquiry into Data Availability and Use](#), providing a further catalyst for change in the Australian data landscape. This inquiry looked at options to increase the availability and use of public and private sector data and found significant barriers to data sharing including:

- a culture of risk aversion
- a dense web of legislative requirements
- a lack of a whole of government approach.

An ABS senior official was outposted to work on the Australian Government's response to the inquiry, which resulted in a Government commitment of \$65 million over four years to reform Australia's data system. Reforms aim to streamline and modernize how the Government shares data, while ensuring privacy and security, to support better decisions, policy, programs, services and research. More specifically, the reforms include establishing the Office of the National Data Commissioner (ONDC) and introducing Commonwealth Data Sharing and Release Legislation. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is leading these reforms, and the ABS is contributing substantially to their design through its technical expertise and advice.

Within the ABS, work to support reform of the national data system is centered within the Statistical Data Integration Division, under the Deputy Australian Statistician, Census and Data Services. A small team of six staff provide direct support and technical advice to the Office of the National Data Commissioner, whilst approximately another 140 staff work across the end-to-end data integration process. Around half of these staff are involved in producing and providing safe access to integrated data. Remaining staff undertake governance, privacy and other risk management activities; engage with researchers and data custodians; build and enhance key people and business integrated data assets; maintain safe and secure data environments, systems and processes; develop new infrastructure; and undertake transparency initiatives to maintain public trust and social license.

New developments

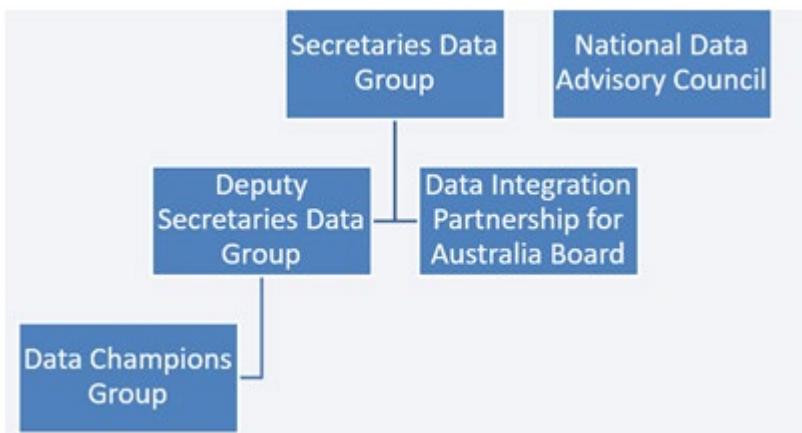
The ABS plays an important role in these data system reforms as Australia's national statistics office, with a wealth of experience in collecting, analyzing and publishing data using secure and privacy preserving methods, across a suite of economic, demographic, social and environmental areas. This role has been recognized by Government, in providing the ABS with funding:

- under the DIPA to develop enduring integrated data assets, which bring together data from across the Australian Public Service, and build linkage capabilities, technical infrastructure and tools to enable greater use of public data across government to inform research and policy. As the lead AIA, the ABS received the largest funding to a single agency under this program; and
- to provide technical support to the National Data Commissioner.

As part of the national Data System reforms, new formal governance arrangements were established across the Australian Government (Figure 1). The ABS is an active participant in all levels of data governance fora. The Australian Statistician is a member of the Secretaries Data Group and the National Data Advisory Council; the Deputy Australian Statistician, Census and Data Services is a member of the Deputy Secretaries Data Group and DIPA Board; and Program Managers and Executive level staff are involved in the Data Champions Group. Through its representation on these

formal fora, ABS is a partner in driving strategy, work program and innovation in the Australian data landscape. ABS staff also participate regularly in technical working groups to progress collaboration and knowledge sharing as system changes are implemented. The ABS has established integrated data asset user groups to provide advice to the ABS on products, data use and analysis methods, and to enable members to share analytical results, work collaboratively and share knowledge.

Figure 1: Australian Government Data Governance



In parallel to national data system reforms, similar legislative changes and cultural reforms are occurring within Australia's constituent states and territories. The ABS has been involved in and supported a number of these initiatives in a variety of ways. The ABS provides a Director level strategic outposted officer in each jurisdiction to engage with, and support, state and territory data and statistical needs, including maximizing the value of public data. Through these staff, awareness of the availability and uses of the MADIP and BLADE key assets, as well as opportunities for data sharing between Australian and State and Territory Governments have grown. 14 linkage and analytical projects for states and territories are currently underway in 2019-20. By sharing its data integration capability, secure integration and analysis environments, and its integrated data products with jurisdictions, the ABS has been able to extend the statistical services it provides to jurisdictions as the Australian NSO.

The ABS is also working closely with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) to develop interoperability methods to enable data integrated by either the ABS and AIHW to be brought together safely and efficiently. This is of particular value for state and territory data in the health and welfare sectors, which has already been shared with and integrated by AIHW, enabling it to be combined with a broader range of Australian Government data through MADIP.

Whilst provision of trusted statistics remains central to ABS' role, in recognition of the changing environment and opportunities presented by sector-wide data reforms, ABS' strategic direction has evolved to reflect the increasingly important role of partnerships in informing Australia's important decisions, and the development of new statistics to support emerging priorities, both through traditional direct collection methods and re-use of public and private sector data.

The ABS also recognizes it has an important role to play in building capability across the Australian Public Service to enable embedding of data analytics into the design of policy, program and services to best meet Australians' needs.

Actions taken

The [Australian Government's response to the Productivity Commission Report on Data Availability and Use](#) included an announcement of three reforms:

- A new Consumer Data Right giving citizens greater transparency and control over their own data;
- A National Data Commissioner to implement and oversee a simpler, more efficient data sharing and release framework; and
- New legislative and governance arrangements to enable better data use while ensuring appropriate safeguards are in place to protect sensitive information.

The ABS is providing technical advice and expertise on two of these three key reforms – advising the National Data Commissioner and contributing to new legislative and governance arrangements for better data use.

The National Data Commissioner is responsible for overseeing and regulating the data sharing system and will drive change and support best practice for data across the Australian Public Service. To support this role, the ABS has collaborated with the Office of the National Data Commissioner to develop a [Best Practice Guide to Applying Data Sharing Principles](#), which was published in March 2019. Although the principles are a requirement for using the Data Sharing and Release legislation, they are intended to be applicable for all data sharing activities. A consultation process is currently underway to inform the introduction of Commonwealth Data Sharing and Release Legislation.

The Government has established a new governance mechanism, the [National Data Advisory Council](#), to advise the National Data Commissioner on ethical data use, community engagement, technical best practice, and industry/international developments. The Council comprises members from the Australian government, business and industry, civil society groups and academia. The Australian Statistician is one of the Government representatives along with the Australian Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Australian Chief Scientist. The Council is working to support the National Data Commissioner to find the optimal balance between streamlining the sharing and release of data and ensuring the protection of privacy.

In addition to these reforms, the ABS is also contributing to whole of government data integration capabilities. The ABS is a partner in the [Data Integration Partnerships for Australia \(DIPA\)](#) program, an investment to maximize the use and value of the Government's data assets, which is leveraging collaboration between over 20 Commonwealth government agencies. Through DIPA, the ABS is improving technical data infrastructure, enhancing whole of government data assets and leveraging these to support cross-portfolio analytical projects on a range of economic, social and environmental issues.

The DIPA program has provided opportunities for ABS to expand its role as an NSO. At the current time (October 2019), ABS is playing a range of critical roles within the public data system: as steward of both the business (BLADE) and person (MADIP) based integrated data assets; co-developer of new place based assets, such as the Location Index (LOC-I⁶) API to streamline data integration of geospatial data; providing data brokerage services to assist researchers and analysts ensure that their use of integrated data is feasible and appropriate as they scope their research proposals;

⁶ In partnership with Department of Energy and Environment, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources, Department of Industry, Innovation and Science, Geoscience Australia and CSIRO.

opening up and streamlining safe access to unidentified integrated data to a wider range of government and non-government users; providing expert integrated data analysis, advice and support for cross-portfolio research projects; and developing and delivering training in integrated data linking and analysis to build this capability across the Australian Public Service.

The ABS is also collaborating with the Data Champions Network, the Department of Health and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, on behalf of the Secretaries Data Group, to investigate a range of strategies to further uplift data literacy and analytics capability. It is anticipated there will be three areas of focus:

- Implementing a data professions stream across the Australian Public Service, with consistently defined roles, skills and competencies. This would create a professional network of staff with data and analytics skills, help the public service attract and retain qualified and capable data practitioners and create clear career pathways.
- Implementing a more coordinated approach to data and analytics capability across the Australian Public Service, commencing with an audit of existing capability building activities and relevant external initiatives.
- Further increasing collaboration beyond agency boundaries, for example, by using more flexible working models.

Results

To assess progress in undertaking data reforms on a national scale, the Government commissioned a [Review of Australian Government Data Activities](#) (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, July 2018) to provide a snapshot of data activities and data resources across government agencies. The Review identified four key areas where Government reforms to the public sector data system are yielding improved outcomes:

1. Access to public sector data is improving
2. Agencies are using data more efficiently to provide agile and effective government services
3. Public sector data skills and capabilities are improving
4. Government data protections are building community trust and confidence in how public sector data is collected and used.

Undertaking reforms across a national data system takes time. While good progress has been made, further work is required to develop, implement and evaluate reforms. The ABS is working with its government partners to continue to drive change and build momentum to develop data infrastructure and capabilities for the future to expand better data sharing and data use.

In recognition of the fast-paced changing data landscape in the ‘information age’, the Government is currently developing a refreshed Public Data Strategy Roadmap across five pillars: legislation and regulation, governance and culture, capability, technical and trust. The ABS is partnering with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to develop the strategy and roadmap, through its role as a technical adviser to the National Data Commissioner and in its capacity as Australia’s national statistics office.

With the current phase of DIPA in its final year of funding, the ABS is also working closely with its partner agencies across government to leverage the data sharing and capability building initiatives that have been built under the DIPA and create further opportunities to embed data system reform. Opportunities are also being pursued to extend data sharing, integration and access infrastructure and delivery of training to states and territories over the next few years.

Lessons learned

In seeking to reform the Australian data system, many opportunities and challenges have arisen, and

will continue to arise, as the legislative environment, culture, public trust and technical capability across government change. As for many reforms, there is a general tendency to set up dedicated new structures and new organisations to move new ideas forward, rather than seek to drive reforms through existing arrangements, and this is playing out in the Australian National Data System context.

The ABS cannot navigate the complexity of the Australian public data environment successfully on its own as risks and obligations are often shared, and sometimes competing, between actors in the data system. A key learning to date has been the importance of ongoing collaboration and effective engagement with ABS' partners across Government. This is most apparent in managing the need to continually balance maximizing the public value and utility of data, with maintaining privacy and trust in the ways the Australian Government shares and uses data.

At the start of the reforms in 2015-17, there was widespread appreciation of the value of data across Government, but little understanding of the complexities and effort involved in managing its safe handling, production and use. Whilst there is a continued focus on technical solutions for safe and efficient data sharing, integration, access and analysis, appreciation of the data governance capabilities and judgments that are an essential enabler of data sharing is growing. However, it is still far from being universally mature.

The realization of the value of the volume of data continues to be hindered by the slow (but growing) recognition across the Australian Public Service of data capability as a specialized and professional capability stream. In contrast, progress in adoption of digital technologies across government, especially those that facilitate service delivery to the public, has progressed relatively quickly. This has been supported by concerted efforts to improve the public's experience of interacting with government and enabled by the long standing (but rapidly evolving) establishment of a professionalized ICT stream across government.

The trust pact between an NSO, data custodians and the public is both fragile and essential, not only to achieving the goal of maximising the value of public data, but to its fundamental operations as an information organisation. Navigating the complex legal, privacy and social licence obligations successfully requires continued effort, stakeholder collaboration, public communication and engagement, and problem solving.

Prior to the commencement of DIPA and other national data reforms around 2017, the ABS was a trusted provider of national statistics, but was not well geared towards rapid data innovation and provision of data services to government. The DIPA initiative, in particular, has provided an opportunity for ABS to work collaboratively with both technical and policy agencies to create a stronger and better functioning data system, to re-cast its role and to broaden the value it provides, as an NSO, to Government. There is more work needed, but ABS is playing an increasingly active role in building capability across the Australian Government in data governance, data linking and analysis of integrated data.