Measuring, monitoring and evaluating cultural change at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)

Engagement, EVP, Innovation and Performance'

Andrew Mann
Program Manager, People Services Branch

Australian Bureau of Statistics
Informing Australia’s important decisions
ABS Transformation Goals

**PEOPLE**
We have a diverse, expert, motivated and agile workforce

**CULTURE**
We are high performing, aligned, engaged, innovative and accountable

**ENVIRONMENT**
We collaborate with stakeholders to understand and respond better to the current and future external environment

**STRATEGY**
Our strategies enable rigorous statistics, strong partnerships, and effective use of resources

**GOVERNANCE**
Our governance supports responsive decision making, prioritisation and management of enterprise risk
Culture matters. And the culture of the ABS identified by the APSC in 2013 — insular, inward looking, reactive — affected decisions and performance as the ABS planned and carried out the 2016 Census. Moreover, its reliance on past patterns to guide future strategies doesn’t work.
• ‘A key risk is that the ABS doesn’t drive deeply enough into the organisation and instead attempts to achieve cultural change through a discrete set of technical responses, rather than as an integrated strategy.’
(MacGibbon p68)
Challenges

- Defining Culture
- Model for Change
- Benchmarking, measuring and evaluating culture
- Prioritising resources to drive culture change
What is culture?

“The shared values, beliefs, norms and expectations that govern the way people approach their work and interact with each other.”

Source: Human Synergistics
When we measured our ABS culture we tried to answer the following questions:

1. What kind of culture do we **want**?
2. What kind of culture do we actually **have**?
3. What **impact** is the current culture having on our employees, customers and ABS as a whole?
4. **Why** do we have this culture; what factors are causing it?
ABS used multiple data sources to understand our baseline culture

What is our current and desired culture?

How can we change our culture in positive ways?

What do our staff value about working at the ABS?

What sorts of behaviours do we need to support our future culture?

State of the Service Employee Census
Annual survey of the entire ABS workforce

Organisational Culture Inventory (OCI)
Random stratified sample of 500 ABS staff 78% response rate

Focus groups and Interviews
Cross agency representation approx. 150 participants
Baseline assessment from all available data sources gave us insight into what our people value about working in the ABS.

**Our colleagues**

- An opportunity to work with some of the brightest and nicest people in an organisation at the pinnacle of its profession
- An environment that is loyal, supportive, collaborative and fun.

**What we do**

- The opportunity to work in an apolitical agency
- The ability to work in a public sector organisation which interacts with the broader business community
- Challenging and interesting work
- The breadth of work opportunities in the ABS

**How we work**

- An environment that supports diversity and inclusion
- Flexible working and encouraging a balanced life
We used the Organisational Culture Inventory (OCI) to assess our current and desired culture.

The Organisational Culture Inventory measures three clusters and 12 thinking and behavioural styles.

**Constructive**
- Accomplish goals
- Strive
- Work well with others
- Innovation and creativity
- Develop others

**Aggressive/Defensive**
- Prove yourself
- Look good
- Critique ideas and others
- Control
- Dominate

**Passive/Defensive**
- Keep out of trouble
- Just do
- Avoid conflict
- Follow the rules
- Don’t ask questions

OCI results showed a gap between the current and desired ABS Culture

Preferred ABS Culture

Current ABS Culture
DESIRED CULTURE
ABS staff identified our preferred culture as one where:

Employees would be expected to:

• know the business, think ahead and plan, pursue a standard of excellence, and take on challenging tasks.
• maintain their personal integrity, communicate ideas, do even simple tasks well, and enjoy their work.
• help others to grow and develop, resolve conflicts constructively, be good listeners, and encourage others.
• use good human relations skills, treat people as more important than things, cooperate with others and deal with others in a friendly, pleasant way.
Customers would report that staff:

• take the initiative to solve problems, make things happen and deliver what they promise
• act with integrity, providing innovative and creative products and services
• go out of their way to assist them to satisfy their needs
• make them feel welcome and treat them in a courteous and friendly way.
ACTUAL CULTURE

Staff reported that in order to fit in at the ABS they:

- Need to push decisions upwards, take few chances, make “popular” rather than necessary decisions, shift responsibility to others and avoid blame for problems.
- Need to stay detached, look for mistakes, question decisions made by others, and point out flaws.
- Need to do what is expected, check all decisions with superiors, and please those in positions of authority.
- Need to always follow policies and practices, make a “good impression”, avoid confrontations, conform, and fit into the “mould”
- Need to back up those with the most authority, stay on peoples good side, switch priorities to please others, and “go along” with others.
ACTUAL CULTURE
Potential Impact on ABS Customers

Customers might report that staff lack interest, avoid making commitments and shift responsibility to others.

Customers might report that staff are argumentative, critical, and blame problems on them.

Customers might report that staff are constrained by policies, rules and impersonal procedures.

Customers might report that staff show more concern for their co-workers and superiors than for clients.

Customers might report that staff lack information and the authority to make decisions and respond to special requests.
Causal Factors of ABS Cultural Issues

• Significance
• Customer Service Focus
• Empowerment and Levels of Influence
• HR systems
• Appraisal systems
• Job Design
How Culture Works

What should be expected here

Mission/Values (Ideal Culture)

The way we do things around here

Structures

Systems

Job Design

Skills/Qualities

What’s expected around here

Actual Culture

How we’re doing here

Individual Level

Group Level

Organisational Level

©2013 Human Sergistics International. All rights reserved. Research and development by Robert A. Cooke Ph.D and J. Clayton Lafferty Ph.D
Statement of Cultural Intent

ABS: Our Culture (2018-2021)

Our cultural intent: The ABS has an inclusive culture that brings out the best in all our people, enabling us to increase our impact through outstanding service delivery.

To achieve this cultural intent, we will all be consistently:

- Customer-focused
- Collaborative
- Accountable
- Agile
- Innovative
- Self-Aware

Australian Bureau of Statistics
Informing Australia’s important decisions
Measuring Progress with our Senior Leaders

I believe I am well prepared to lead culture change in the ABS and know where I can find support.

89% 76% 78%

I have changed the way I behave and interact with others as a result of the insights I gained from the culture change program.

This program of work has provided me with useful experiences and new insights to help me shape our organisational culture.
ABS is number 1 Agency in 30 (20%) of the 153 items
In the top 5 for 53%
Number 2 Agency for Supervisor Engagement
Number 4 Agency Team Engagement
Have been asked to be a case study for the whole of service report
Measuring progress at all levels
State of the Service Employee Census – 2019 ABS Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSE SCALE</th>
<th>% POSITIVE</th>
<th>VARIANCE FROM 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ABS motivates me to help achieve its objectives</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ABS is a Customer Focused organisation (i.e. we connect with, understand and respond to the needs of our stakeholders, customers and providers)</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>+8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the ABS, we collaborate across the organisation (including sharing information and knowledge across work programs)</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within my Section, we adopt an Agile approach to our work (i.e. frequently re-assessing and quickly adapting to changing priorities and environments)</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand what a high performing culture looks like in my Section</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a clear understanding of how my Section's role contributes to my agency's strategic direction</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS leaders (EL2 and SES) are driving a high performing culture</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel well prepared (i.e. well informed and appropriately skilled) to succeed professionally in the ABS post transformation</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My supervisor empowers me by delegating tasks that are both in keeping with competencies required of my level and stretching me to help me grow</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, how satisfied are you with your ability to access and use flexible working arrangements?</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KEY
- AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS GREATER THAN COMPARATOR
- AT LEAST 5 PERCENTAGE POINTS LESS THAN COMPARATOR
ABS Transformation Survey - April 2019

My behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behaviour</th>
<th>Apr 18 (% Agree)</th>
<th>Oct 18 (% Agree)</th>
<th>Apr 19 (% Agree)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-aware</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Focused</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agile</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountable</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Behaviours of my colleagues

HIGH PERFORMANCE BEHAVIOURS
Comparison of Oct 18, Apr 18 and Apr 19 results
In my day to day my colleagues are:

- Self-aware: April 18 62%, October 18 60%, April 19 62%
- Innovative: April 18 68%, October 18 70%, April 19 72%
- Customer Focused: April 18 81%, October 18 83%, April 19 84%
- Collaborative: April 18 80%, October 18 78%, April 19 79%
- Agile: April 18 74%, October 18 76%, April 19 80%
- Accountable: April 18 73%, October 18 72%, April 19 73%

% Agree Apr 18 (% Agree)  % Agree Oct 18 (% Agree)  % Agree Apr 19 (% Agree)
Changes to staff perceptions related to selected Constructive aspects of ABS culture

Constructive aspects of ABS Culture
Changes in staff perceptions since mid-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constructive Aspect</th>
<th>View in mid-2017 (% Agree)</th>
<th>Current View (% Agree)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>72.9</td>
<td>84.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Actualising</td>
<td>74.9</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanistic-Encouraging</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliative</td>
<td>69.1</td>
<td>78.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Changes to staff perceptions related to selected Defensive aspects of ABS culture

Defensive aspects of ABS Culture
Changes in staff perceptions since mid-2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects</th>
<th>View in mid-2017 (% Agree)</th>
<th>Current View (% Agree)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>46.6</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>36.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppositional</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Australian Bureau of Statistics: Informing Australia's important decisions
The next OCI is being run as we speak... Let's hope the results will look more like this!
Thank you

Questions?