

Terms of Reference: Blue-Skies Thinking Network

BACKGROUND

In 2016 the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Statistics (HLG-MOS) approved a new governance structure for its subsidiary activities, to ensure more efficient implementation of the Strategic Planning Framework. This included the creation of the Blue-Skies Thinking Network (hereafter referred to as “the network”). This network will continue the existing innovation activities of the Modernisation Committees on Production and Methods, and Products and Sources.

OBJECTIVES

Under the supervision of the HLG-MOS, the network will be the "ideas factory" for HLG-MOS activities. It will reflect the on-going desire for creativity and agility to identify and evaluate new opportunities for official statistics. It will comprise a flexible pool of researchers, who will consider new ideas in brief evaluation projects (maximum 6 months), and present the results to the Executive Board.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

This network will be an umbrella structure for short-term task teams to investigate new ideas and opportunities through evaluation projects. The aim is to work in an agile and responsive way. Any idea can proceed as long as it is in line with the HLG-MOS Strategic Framework and gets the support of at least two statistical organisations (sponsors), who are willing to actively participate in the project. Active participation means that those organisations are willing to invest the time of at least one staff member (or hire a suitable consultant) to participate in the evaluation project. The sponsors may also invite other people / organisations, including outside official statistics, to participate in the project.

The outcomes of these projects could be the following:

- A proposal not to continue, if there is no strong business case
- A proposal to put the work on hold, and re-visit it at a specified future time, when the business case may be clearer
- A proposal for further work. This could take the form of a project proposal to be considered for the next year, or a smaller scale activity to be carried out under one of the HLG-MOS groups.

Information about the investigations being undertaken by this network is potentially very valuable to the wider community of official statisticians. It offers statistical organisations the chance to quickly sift new opportunities and assess the potential value they might obtain from investing further in a new area. To achieve this value, it will be necessary to actively promote what has been completed, what is being considered and what is in progress.

TIMETABLE

The network will become active from January 2017. The Terms of Reference, and the continued existence of the network will be reviewed every year by the HLG-MOS.

METHODS OF WORK

Projects will work mainly by web conferences and wikis, and will be expected to meet virtually at least monthly. Physical meetings may be arranged where necessary, usually on the margins of other events. They will ensure effective communication with all stakeholder groups, using all appropriate communication channels.

MEMBERSHIP

This network will not have a formal composition, or regular meetings. A light-touch coordination role will ensure results are produced on time, and identify dependencies, duplication and gaps between projects and other HLG-MOS activities, as well as ensuring coordination with other relevant initiatives, such as those of the European Statistical System.

This coordination role will be achieved through the nomination of an "Innovation Manager", with the support of the UNECE Secretariat.

Membership of project teams will be self-selecting, depending on current priorities and interests of different organisations.

The secretariat to the network and the project teams will be provided by UNECE.