**UNECE High-level Group for the  
Modernisation of Official Statistics**

**Business case for Strategic Communication Framework Project**

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| This business case was prepared by Statistics Canada and CSO Ireland, and is submitted to the HLG-MOS for their approval. |

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| **1 Purpose** | | | | |
| The environment in which official statistics operate has changed significantly over the last twenty years. Due to developments in digital technology, the number of alternative data providers has grown and new communication platforms such as social media have changed the way people look for and consume information.  Statistical offices have to rethink their approach and methods for communicating with data users and the public. A strategic framework would be very useful in this context. The concept of a strategic approach to the communication of official statistics is relatively new for most NSOs, who have traditionally focussed more effort on dissemination practices. However, in this increasingly competitive environment, an effective communications strategy is essential for maintaining the relevance of official statistics. NSOs need to consistently and clearly communicate their values, purpose and differentiators through a strategic approach to communications.  There is a distinction between strategy and tactics for communication. The further work should focus on a common understanding at the strategic level, and should not seek to harmonise at the tactical level. Statistical organisations should look at communications strategies in broader risk management and business continuity contexts. | | | | |
| **2 Description of the activity** | | | | |
| **WP1: Guidelines on the strategic communications development process**  In order to support NSOs in implementing a strategic approach to communications by developing a toolkit that could include:   * Guidelines on the strategic communications development process (including public environment assessment; positioning; identification of the organization’s values and strengths; identification of communications objectives and principles; identification of issues and challenges; organisational strategic alignment; definition of performance objectives and indicators; evaluation mechanisms; and creating the plan). * Successful methods and approaches to engage with various audiences and gain traction in the public domain (with stakeholders, expert and novice data users; news media; the public). * Best practices with regard to measuring success and impact of communications. * Organisational communications maturity model.   **WP2: Best practices on Building Brand Awareness**  Building brand awareness forms part of a communications strategy and is intrinsically linked to all communications outputs. This workpackage will develop generic guidance on building brand awareness.  **WP3: Guidelines on Issue and Reputation Management**  This workpackage would include the development of a generic guidance document with regard to issue management. This could include guidance on issue identification; internal and external communications protocols (e.g. who says what, when and how); writing holding statements, Q&A development; scenario planning; spokesperson training and preparation; and the use of external expertise as appropriate. The development of these guidelines on how to identify issues that can potentially damage the reputation of the NSO, could help NSOs take a proactive approach to issue management.  The Guidelines produced by the project will include best practices and case studies from countries. The project team would use their expertise, input from other experts, and information collected from NSOs to draft practical guides that would be made available online. | | | | |
| **3 Alternatives considered** | | | | |
| Alternatively, the project could focus on other specific communication areas. For example:   * A positioning exercise that would result in a position statement that would help to distinguish products and services of NSOs from those of competitors and reach consensus on role boundaries. * Tools to broaden the target audience for communication could help NSOs to build awareness of official statistics amongst the wider, non-expert audience. * Guidelines on tactical communications issues   However, the strategic framework envisioned by the project would give NSOs the tools to address these areas in a systematic way without being too prescriptive or limiting. The project output would provide a basis for developing all areas of communication and therefore would be useful for all NSOs regardless of their current approach to communication. | | | | |
| **4 Expected Benefits** | | | | |
|  | | | Reduced costs | |
|  | | | Increased efficiency | |
|  | | | Reduced risks | |
|  | | | New capabilities to meet user needs | |
| Justification: Modernising communication is a key element in the overall process of modernising statistical production. NSOs need to communicate with all relevant stakeholders throughout the production process, from data providers to data users. Effective communication makes sure that stakeholders understand the value and importance of official statistics. Sustainable communications systems and processes ensure a consistently high quality of communications between the NSO and its stakeholders. | | | | |
| **5 Type of Activity** | | | | |
|  | | New activity | | |
|  | | Extension of existing activity | | |
|  | | Other *(specify below)* | | |
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| **6 Which key priorities in the HLG-MOS Strategic Framework does the proposed project relate to?** | | | | |
|  | Take cost out of our organisations to reinvest in more value added areas | | | |
|  | Explore new areas collectively and leverage each other’s' research investments in specific areas | | | |
|  | Provide whole of government data ecosystems based on international standards, for better estimates in key policy areas | | | |
|  | Renew our governance and operating processes | | | |
| Justification: The project output would help NSOs review and renew their communication approach, methods, and process, leading to more targeted and effective communication, increased visibility and relevance for the NSO, and improved reputation. Building capacity in communications across NSOs will also result in increased access and use of statistical information by new audiences. | | | | |
| **7 How does the proposed activity relate to other activities under the HLG-MOS?** | | | | |
| Changing to a strategic approach to communications has implications for the skills required for staff in a statistical office. The work proposed by the Capabilities and Communication Modernisation Group to create a training framework based on GAMSO will address this aspect.  The Issues Management WP has strong links to the Risk Management work being developed by the Capabilities and Communication Modernisation Group.  The project has direct links with the work of the Statistical Data Dissemination and Communication organizing committee. The committee has indicated that they strongly support the project and are interested in providing resources. The organizing committee plans to mirror the themes of the project at the next Dissemination and Communication workshop in June 2018. The workshop is an excellent opportunity to collect materials for the project and gain concrete input on planned outputs. | | | | |
| **8 Proposed start and end dates** | | | | |
| **Start:**  **End:** | | | | January 2018  December 2018 |
| **9 Expected costs** | | | | |
| Volunteers from NSOs to work together on common areas, to contribute case studies and content and to assess and critique the usefulness of the guide.  6 person months for Project Manager  Costs associated with 10-12 participants to attend Face to Face project sprint in 2018. | | | | |