

Strategic Planning for Statistics at the ABS

including an overview of
New Zealand, Canada
and the South Pacific

Overview of this session

- External aspects to strategic planning at the ABS
- Internal ABS processes
- Brief overview (if time) of ABS Corporate Plan
 - context for strategic planning
- Overview of planning processes in New Zealand, Canada and the South Pacific



Background

- ABS in the Treasury portfolio
- Australian Statistician reports to Parliament
- Parliamentary Secretary to Treasurer is responsible minister for ABS



Two aspects to strategic planning at the ABS

- External
 - environmental scanning
 - establishing user needs
- Internal
 - Planning cycle
 - Strategic Directions Statements, gaps and new work bids
 - Corporate Plan, Financial Plan, Forward Work Program

1. External

- Policy priorities
 - government
- Emerging economic and social issues
 - community, academic, private sector
- International statistical developments
 - SNA etc.

1. External - user needs

- Determining user needs
 - Australian Statistics Advisory Council
 - Bilateral meetings with clients
 - at all levels of the ABS
 - Statistics User Groups
 - Outposted Officers
 - critical - in key government departments
 - Information Development Plans
 - priorities and gaps
 - other agencies also providers of statistics

1. External - ASAC

- ASAC - advises the Minister and the Statistician on
 - annual and longer term statistical priorities that should be undertaken by the ABS
 - improvement, extension and co-ordination of statistics for public purposes in Aus.
 - membership - government, business, academia, community (approx 30 members)

1. External - funding sources

- Government appropriation - main source
 - base government funding - known 4 years in advance
 - 1 year of appropriation, 3 years of estimates
 - core work program - significant and stable
 - locked in - National Accounts, Unemployment, CPI etc
 - planning cycle then focuses on new work

1. External - funding sources for new work

- Government appropriation
 - New Policy Proposals
 - additional specific purpose funding - rare for ABS
 - requires support across govt (Treasury, client agency etc)
 - Sales of goods and services (declining)
 - ABS required by government to charge for some services
 - User funded statistical work (growing)
 - mostly government depts new work

1. External - other funding sources for new work

- Funder may attach conditions
 - the more conditions, the more ABS pushes back to quality
 - adherence to statistical best practice
 - risks - diverts resources and skilled staff from core work
- ABS required (by legislation) to publish from each survey
 - publication limited to results of suitable quality

1. External - assessing new work options

- consistent with ABS mission and core role?
- contemporary public policy need?
- 'fit for purpose' solution possible?
 - can be admin or survey data
- ABS capacity to do the work?
 - funds, skilled staff etc
- Does the activity build long term capability of the ABS?
 - not a 'statistics factory'

2. Internal aspect to ABS Strategic Planning

- Response to external environment - forward looking (not just reactive)
- Planning Cycle
 - Strategic Directions Statements, gaps and new work bids
- Corporate Plan, Financial Plan
- Forward Work Program



2. Internal - ABS Planning Cycle - principles

- link to government budget cycle
- flexibility to respond to emerging issues
- key decision making points over 13 month period
- External scanning and Corporate Plan - set context for Planning cycle



2. Internal - ABS Planning Cycle - elements

- Strategic Directions Statements of ABS Divisions - includes gaps identification
 - population statistics, dissemination, methodology, technology, corporate services, economic statistics
- Bid List for new work - and offsets (lower priority work)
- Funding options and Bid Decisions for next 3 years (annually)
- Forward Work Program - includes core



2. Internal - ABS Planning Cycle - overview

- May Mngmt Meeting - 13 months out
 - Strategic Directions Statements - gaps
- July - August - 12-10 months
 - proposals for work & offsets
- September Mngmt Meeting - 9 months out - prioritisation
- December - February - Division Heads
 - ongoing discussion
- April - 2 months out - final decisions



2. Internal - ABS Forward Work Program

- Final decisions of Planning Cycle released in ABS Forward Work Program
- FWP - core program & new initiatives
- FWP is also developed in the context of the ABS Financial Plan
 - Revenue
 - Operating Budget (surplus / deficit)
 - Capital Plan (9 offices)
 - Cash management



3. ABS Corporate Plan - overview

- Mission statement
- Objectives
- Values and People
- Strategies
- Success statements
- Performance Measures - coming



3. ABS Corporate Plan - Objectives

- Expanded & improved national statistical service
- ABS services that are timely, relevant, responsive and respected for their integrity and quality
- Informed and increased use of statistics



3. ABS Corporate Plan - Objectives (cont)

- ABS is a key contributor to international statistical activities important to Australia or our region
- ABS builds capability to continually improve its effectiveness
- Trust and cooperation of providers
- ABS is a respected and strongly supported organisation



4. Overview of Planning at Statistics New Zealand

- External scanning
 - similar to Australia - visions & goals exist
 - New work - relevant to SNZ as lead statistical agency
 - Gaps identification
 - Coordination of statistics across agencies
 - new focus as result of government review
 - resulted in increased funding
 - complexity of coordination & planning - difficult to implement

4. Overview of Planning at Statistics New Zealand

- Internal Planning and funding
 - working towards 3 year financial planning
 - Goal is 3+3+3 - less detail in final years of the 9 years
 - Complexity of current projects (admin and survey) limits next steps towards longer term financial planning
 - 'forks in the road' can limit decisions
- Capacity development - key focus
 - getting good staff - skills and numbers
 - choosing the 'right' projects

4. Overview of Planning at Statistics Canada

- External scanning - similar to Aus
- Internal planning and funding
 - Account managers and cost centres prepare bids
 - Bids are based on 5% of current cost centre budget
 - Bids go first to Head of Agency for review
 - Similar process to ABS from that point i.e. internal bidding cycle
 - Occasionally seek government funding
 - only possible for govt. announcements

4. Overview of Planning in Asia and South Pacific

- Thailand - large decentralised process
- Indonesia - less so than Thailand
- South Pacific - variety
 - common issue - work programs entwined with donor conditions
 - tied grants for infrastructure (roads etc)
 - may exhaust resources, limit capacity development
 - Vanuatu infrastructure grants for Agriculture Census & a Household Expenditure Survey - 23 staff only

Summary

- Strategic Planning at ABS involves
 - External focus
 - scanning, connections, involvement, strategic directions statements, review - ongoing
 - Internal processes
 - looking for opportunities to fund new work, core work continuing, reviewing lower priority work, 3 year planning, associated financial plans