

Intro

Statistics New Zealand is entrusted by Government and the people of New Zealand to lead the Official Statistics System. We are responsible for providing official statistics that are the result of a careful statistical production process and deliver reliable key statistics such as the consumer price index (CPI) and the gross domestic product (GDP statistic). We provide end to end statistical production to government agencies, the private sector and non-government agencies.

However, we have a broader responsibility to work with colleagues in the data ecosystem to ensure that our nation's data services and products deliver to the needs of the community. Our role gives us the mandate to respond to New Zealand's increasingly urgent data demands and places us in an exciting position to enable change in the data ecosystem.

Our environment is changing and our customers are demanding more data. Decision-makers, policy-writers, indigenous Maori, business, community groups and individuals want to enhance their use of rich data resources held to inform thinking and evidence-based decision making.

This requires us to move from a historical remit as a provider of official statistics for decision making, to a new expanded remit focusing on unleashing the power and value of data through expanding our role to that of provider, enabler, innovator and steward of data.

We have had to change the way we think and take an 'outside-in' approach to our engagement, listening to our customers and the data ecosystem, anticipating and responding to needs in an ever-changing, data driven environment.

Central to this is the collaborative partnerships we hold with a number of government agencies, Maori and iwi, business and community groups.

I will discuss how partnerships support our four core roles, using an example for each role.

Provider of data and statistical services

Our role as Provider is has historically been Statistics NZ's primary role. However, we're now looking at how we can build on this and improve the customer and supplier experience. In order to do this we need to get closer to our customers to better understand how we can add value for them.

The increased focus on data driven decision making and investment approach to government spending requires data sets that support analysis at a much more granular level. It requires us to develop and steward accessible, integrated data sets that enable investment decision to be made.

Fundamental to our journey is the establishment of the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI), an Integrated Data Service for New Zealand, which is a centralized collection of linked government administration data that is of significant statistical value. The data is de-identified and made available to approved researchers. The IDI provides a research dataset of longitudinal microdata about individuals, households and businesses. Researchers can access the dataset to answer research, policy and evaluation questions to provide insights into some of New Zealand's more complex decisions, leading to positive outcomes for New Zealanders.

The Integrated Data Infrastructure has been a successful formulation in government thinking across a number of areas.

Data from the IDI was used to underpin work on a Cross-Agency Youth Funding Review, and the IDI will continue to play an important role in the Government's emerging Social Investment programme.

The IDI allowed the student loan scheme to be accurately valued, and facilitated the development of the Careers New Zealand Compare Study Options tool.

We are now working with the Auckland City Mission, a social service organisation, to explore the benefits of incorporating non-government organisation data into the IDI. The Mission's data has been assessed for technical inclusion and a business case is underway. We will produce initial insights to the Mission and evaluate the broader benefits of inclusion of non-government organisation data.

Enabler

In our role as Enabler we inform quality decisions through more timely and higher quality data. This requires greater insight, more organised data, and close working relationships with other organisations. To be able to capture the data that decision makers need, we need to be an interactive organisation.

We have a very unique relationship with Māori, our indigenous population. This relationship requires careful engagement. In our role as kaitiaki tatauranga, or steward of government data we view the information held as a taonga, or treasure.

Successful engagement with Māori is founded on mutual respect and learning through meaningful dialogue in order to fully understand different perspectives. We have held several forums with Māori to better understand and improve our data delivery, showcasing some of the work being done with the data and presenting an open source tool we've developed to house and disseminate data, while protecting privacy and confidentiality. We continue to work on what the concept of privacy and confidentiality mean to Māori.

In 2013 we launched Te Kupenga, our first survey of Māori well-being. The survey collected information on a wide range of topics to give a holistic picture of the social, cultural and economic well-being of Māori in New Zealand. The survey also provides important information about the health of Māori language and culture.

He Arotahi Tatauranga (Māori Statistics Framework) is designed to assist all users of these statistics to determine how to think about, measure and locate data 'For' and 'About' Māori. The framework provides an opportunity for Māori to determine how to decide their own information supply and use.

Innovation

Our Innovator role encourages thinking about how we can add further value and how we can do things in a better way than we're currently doing them. We often think 'risk' when we talk about innovation, but it's about understanding and managing risk rather than seeing it as a road block to improvement. Innovation and timeliness also go hand-in-hand – we shouldn't wait years to fully

transform the way we work, but rather work in iterations for gradual improvement. Innovation is everyone's job; we're all Innovators.

In the NGO sector, we have a relationship with an intermediary Figure.NZ, an NGO specialising in the provision of economic, social and environmental data to the general public. We recently partnered with them to launch a new business tool, Business Figures, a free online service for business data users. The tool provides a range of data in digestible formats to help inform business decisions.

We actively explore options within the private sector for businesses to provide data directly from their systems, and as part of this, entered into a trial data supply agreement with accounting software provider Xero. Xero is an accounting software provider that provides a cloud based financial accounting system used by 160,000 New Zealand businesses. It is primarily aimed at small and medium sized businesses.

This innovative trial tested the feasibility of accessing financial information electronically from accounting software systems like Xero.

The trial was a valuable learning exercise and identified potential benefits and the further work required by both organisations to make this work. It highlighted ways to improve the quality of data and statistics in the future, particularly timeliness, accuracy and a reduction in direct surveying of businesses.

One of the challenges of this project was the unstructured nature of the data which made it challenging to interrogate and use for the delivery of critical official statistics. It was challenging to get businesses to take part in the trial because the most immediate and obvious benefits of participating were more about increased data quality rather than reduced surveying (which would be a longer term benefit of participation). Xero are now looking to introduce more structure and standardization to account data at the detailed level, while Statistics New Zealand are exploring how to better incentivize businesses to voluntarily provide information from financial accounting systems like Xero.

Stewardship

As data leaders, stewardship is also a key responsibility for us and our Government Statistician has formal regulatory stewardship obligations. As Stewards, our role is to drive the development and use of data through collaboration and partnerships. We are seen as data custodians, and are responsible for the care and good use of our data.

The New Zealand Data Futures Forum was established in December 2013 by the Ministers of Finance and Statistics to explore the potential benefits and risks for New Zealand of sharing, linking and using data. The Forum produced a set of recommendations about how New Zealand can safely manage and optimize data use.

In October 2015, the members of the Data Futures Partnership Working Group were appointed. The Working Group will facilitate and support innovative cross-sector data use projects (catalyst projects), and engage in a public conversation about social license and public attitudes to data integration.

The Data Futures secretariat is located at Statistics New Zealand which places us in an ideal position to engage regularly, have input into their direction, and work collaboratively.

How partnerships among various sectors in the info industry are facilitated

Statistics New Zealand is an important co-leader in New Zealand's data ecosystem which is increasingly being called on to deliver greater value to the community.

We engage and work to support the international development of Statistics through engagement with other statistical agencies and bodies, providing expert contributions and playing a role in key statistical committees. As a small NSO with limited resources and at some distance from our northern hemisphere colleagues, we prioritise our international engagement program according to those things that we consider we can add unique value to, and to those things of strong interest to us.

The Government Statistician currently provides a leading role in the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Official Statistics and participation in the OECD Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy.

In recent years we have chaired the UNSC Expert group on international statistical classifications and we continue to participate in areas such as population census modernization, establishment survey development, national accounts development, the value of official statistics, population ageing and customer focus and innovation. We have also played an active role in the ESCAP Steering Group for the Regional Program on Economic Statistics and we are contributing to the development of a roadmap for the statistical measurement of the SDGs.

We are committed to international collaborations with our geographic neighbours in Australia and across the Pacific.

We enjoy a close relationship and have many commonalities with the Australian Bureau of Statistics. We share intellectual capability, information and resources.

A current strategic focus is to ensure statistical capability in the Pacific and the continued leadership of the Pacific Statistics Steering Committee (PSSC).

In New Zealand we actively participate in the Government's ICT Strategic Leadership Group and Partnership Framework. The Information Group provides leadership to ensure that information is managed as an asset across the government's data ecosystem and advises from a system-wide perspective on how government can better unlock the value of the information it holds on behalf of citizens.

At the statistical production level we collaborate with other government agencies engaged in the production of official statistics, providing consultancy advice and support. In the past year we have successfully initiated a new joint program of environmental reporting with the Ministry for the Environment.

As discussed in the previous section, the reach of our domestic engagement activity is now taking us beyond our traditional official statistics system partners into the broader information sector in New Zealand. A recent example is the collaboration with a not-for-profit organization, Business Figures, that provides free online industry-specific information to businesses drawn from a range of official data sources and some private sector ones.

Opportunities for these types of collaborative engagements are becoming increasingly evident as we have promoted our willingness to engage and as we have been able to enter into or resource catalyst projects to 'test the water'.

Risk factors to consider

As an organisation we are committed to partnering actively and providing a meaningful depth of service to our partners. To do this, we needed to be open and willing to change.

We recently hosted a workshop with key partners to understand their thoughts on future collaborative development. We know that working in partnership yields value that is greater than either party could produce on its own.

One of the key learnings across all our partnerships has been the need to understand the operational context of the organisations involved – strategic objectives, future direction and upcoming developments. The work needs to have a clear alignment with business goals and have leadership commitment.

It is important to take the time to establish and maintain good working relationships, which will in turn develop a good collaborative way of working. The time spent building and maintaining relationships with a willing cannot be underestimated.

Transparency is crucial and this needs to be balanced with the partner organisation's security and confidentiality requirements, particularly around commercially sensitive information.

What does the future hold?

We are on an exciting evolution in the accessibility, usability and value of statistical data. We have a clear vision, purpose and goals and play a leading role in the data ecosystem.

The proliferation of personal data across the data ecosystem gives rise to questions about citizen's privacy and other confidentiality. A tension exists between the needs of decision makers to generate insights at much deeper levels than ever before to solve systemic problems, and the desire to have their rights and privacy maintained. Although our brand remains trusted and independent, we will need to ensure that we maintain our 'social licence' as a trusted steward of the nation's data and information.

We will continue to change and adapt in order to meet demand and deliver the products and services that our customers and New Zealand needs. Customers increasingly want access to underlying data. This will require working alongside our customers and co-creating new products and services to meet needs.

We are committed to opening our data, and this will be balanced against trust and security which are critical to our ability to serve New Zealand.