

Statistics New Zealand's Strategic Directions

2002 and Beyond

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Introduction

Statistics New Zealand's Strategic Directions 2002 and Beyond sets out our medium- to long-term directions. This document outlines our vision, mission, role and values, as well as the six strategic goal areas, with their associated outcomes, that we will need to focus on over the next few years.

This plan will be the key business driver for all areas of Statistics New Zealand, as it encompasses both the statistical and service programmes. If it is going to make a difference, it must be a living document with links to all of our performance agreements at agency, workgroup and individual levels.

Statistics New Zealand faces a range of challenges and opportunities that have considerable implications for the future shape and accessibility of official statistics. The demand for more detailed and 'cross-cutting' information services is increasing within New Zealand society. Ongoing changes in technology are enhancing the accessibility and usage of data, and community expectations are increasing about the integrity, relevance and quality of statistical services.

Statistics New Zealand is recognised as both a leader and key participant in the system of official statistics. It is therefore no coincidence that *Statistics New Zealand's Strategic Directions 2002 and Beyond* discusses official statistics – what they are, their importance, who provides them and where we fit into the overall system.

One key challenge that this plan seeks to address is how we can work with others in the wider system of official statistics to deliver statistical information that governments, communities and individuals recognise as:

- being relevant to themselves and their concerns
- representing a good return for their input
- providing fair and objective information and reporting, and
- coming from trusted and reliable sources.

The plan also identifies four core values that provide the guiding principles and behaviours for us all. Together, these core values underpin the manner in which we conduct our business and maintain our reputation for integrity.

The final section of the plan broadly outlines Statistics New Zealand's strategic management process and the different planning elements that make it up.

A plan alone, however, will not be enough for future success. We are fortunate to have highly skilled, professional people who are strongly committed to the importance of sustaining and enhancing official statistics. This commitment has been, and will continue to be, at the core of the organisation's high performance, and it will largely be through your dedicated work that our strategic goals and outcomes will be achieved.

The next stages in the strategic planning process are to:

- prioritise and sequence the initiatives in this plan
- identify any resourcing and risk management implications
- develop statistical and service programme business plans
- identify the associated action plans required to meet the strategic goals, and
- develop the processes for monitoring and measuring progress towards meeting these strategic goals.

I would ask each of you to read through this document and consider how you might contribute to our strategic directions. Together, we can further the vision of 'Making Statistics Count'.

Statistics New Zealand's Strategic Directions 2002 and Beyond has involved much robust discussion and critical thinking. My thanks go to all of those who have assisted in developing this plan.



Brian Pink
Government Statistician
April 2002

Official Statistics

Official statistics ... are collected by government to inform debate, decision-making and research both within government and by the wider community. They provide an objective perspective of the changes taking place in national life and allow comparisons between periods of time and geographic areas.

Vital as this is, open access to official statistics provides the citizen with more than a picture of society. It offers a window on the work and performance of government itself, showing the scale of government activity in every area of public policy and allowing the impact of government policies and actions to be assessed.

Reliable social and economic statistics are fundamental ... to open government. It is the responsibility of government to provide them and to maintain public confidence in them.

(Source: HMSO (1993). "White Paper on Open Government", Cm.2290, HMSO, ISBN 010122902X)

For official statistics to be trusted and used by governments and the wider community, the statistics must be objective, relevant, equally and openly accessible and of a high quality. There are various dimensions around the term quality in relation to official statistics. These include the key characteristics of accuracy, timeliness, being fit for the intended usage, and produced in accordance with international statistical frameworks and best practice.

Within New Zealand, official statistics are defined in section 2 of the Statistics Act 1975 as:

statistics derived by Government Departments from:

- (a) Statistical surveys as defined in this section; and
- (b) Administrative and registration records and other forms and papers the statistical analyses of which are published regularly, or are planned to be published regularly, or could reasonably be published regularly.

Any government department may produce official statistics, but Statistics New Zealand produces many of them, particularly economic and population statistics. The principal official statistics not produced by Statistics New Zealand are those on education, health, crime, justice and welfare. These are produced by other government departments from surveys conducted by or for them, or from administrative records.

As well as being a key producer of official statistics, Statistics New Zealand takes a lead role in improving the overall effectiveness of New Zealand's statistical environment, and is responsible for coordinating all New Zealand official statistics.

Part I of the Statistics Act 1975 covers all official statistics, whether produced by Statistics New Zealand or by other government departments. The Act provides for the Government Statistician to manage and coordinate survey activities so as to render most useful the official statistics produced, and also to avoid unnecessary duplication. Under the Act, the Government Statistician may also review the collection, compilation, analysis, abstraction, and publication of official statistics prepared by Statistics New Zealand or by other government departments.

Therefore, for New Zealand to have a system of official statistics that is strong and effective, all its participants (ie producers and/or users) need to:

- produce and disseminate statistics to the standard expected of official statistics
- use them appropriately, and
- act for the well-being of the system.

Vision

**Making
Statistics
Count**

Mission

Official statistics for governments and the wider community that:

- are trusted, of high integrity and quality
- can be accessed by all, and
- provide relevant and timely information on key aspects of New Zealand's economy, environment and society.

Role

The Statistics Act 1975 sets out the Government Statistician's role in, and responsibilities for, all official statistics whether produced by Statistics New Zealand or by other government departments.

To meet its responsibilities under this Act, Statistics New Zealand's main roles are to:

1. Provide leadership for New Zealand's official statistics.
2. Be the key contributor to the collection, analysis and dissemination of official statistics relating to New Zealand's economy, environment and society.
3. Build and maintain trust in official statistics.
4. Ensure that official statistics are of high integrity and quality and are equally available to all.

To give effect to the principles for government action on the Treaty of Waitangi, Statistics New Zealand will work to ensure Māori statistical needs can be identified and progressively met.

Values

The following four core values are the guiding principles and behaviours for Statistics New Zealand. These values do not exist in isolation: together they underpin the way we do business. By having and 'living' these values, Statistics New Zealand will retain the trust of governments and the wider community and will achieve its mission and strategic goals.

Integrity

Integrity is about being ethical and meeting the high standards of behaviour expected of public servants. To demonstrate *integrity* we will:

- act honestly and fairly
- operate in a politically neutral manner
- provide objective and relevant data and analysis, and
- be procedurally transparent and open.

Professionalism

Professionalism involves setting and meeting challenging technical and quality standards, and continually improving our knowledge and performance. To demonstrate *professionalism* we will:

- develop and maintain technical and managerial expertise
- act with commitment, competence and responsibility
- respond to the changing environment and client needs
- contribute to international statistical developments
- demonstrate a commitment to public service
- be dedicated to ongoing improvement and innovation, and
- operate efficiently and effectively.

Cooperation

Cooperation means working together for the benefit of the 'whole' rather than for oneself. To demonstrate *cooperation* we will:

- encourage mutual trust and teamwork
- respect our colleagues, their diversity and contributions
- act collegially both within Statistics New Zealand and externally
- encourage a corporate focus
- share ideas, information and best practice, and
- foster open and effective communication.

Security

Maintaining Statistics New Zealand's reputation for protecting the *security* and confidentiality of information within its care is crucial to retaining the trust and cooperation of information providers and clients. To protect *security* and confidentiality we will:

- meet all confidentiality guarantees given to information providers and clients
- protect the information in a secure physical and computer environment, and
- rigorously apply the security of information requirements of the Statistics Act 1975.

In addition to these values, we adhere to the various codes of conduct, legislation and standards expected of New Zealand public servants.

Strategic Goals

The overall goal and mission statement for Statistics New Zealand is:

Official statistics for governments and the wider community that:

- are trusted, of high integrity and quality
- can be accessed by all, and
- provide relevant and timely information on key aspects of New Zealand's economy, environment and society.

This has been chosen as the overall goal because it is fundamental to the business of statistics and the process of open and effective government.

To achieve this overall goal, six key contributing goals have been identified. They are to:

1. Strengthen the cohesiveness and effectiveness of official statistics.
2. Build upon the trust that governments, communities and individuals have in official statistics.
3. Maintain the cooperation of data providers.
4. Increase the usage and user understanding of official statistics.
5. Enable Māori statistical needs to be met.
6. Enhance Statistics New Zealand's capability.

These goals are not given in any order of importance (ie they are all equal). However, there are strong linkages and dependencies between them. They start from the perspective of the system of official statistics, its cohesiveness and effectiveness, and the maintenance of trust within it (goals 1 and 2). Maintaining the cooperation of data providers (goal 3) is then given, as this is crucial to the supply of high quality official statistics. Without such statistics, goals 1 and 2 would not be met (ie the official statistics would be less trusted and therefore less effective).

Goals 4 and 5 then focus on having the official statistics available to and used by a wide range of users, from governments and their agencies, through to community groups and individuals. Again, if these goals are not met, then goals 1, 2 and 3 will be less effective.

For Statistics New Zealand to achieve goals 1 to 5, it needs highly skilled, well-led and experienced people, as well as effective systems and support processes. The strategic directions within the plan have capability implications for Statistics New Zealand. These include the need for statisticians who can effectively and actively work with other government agencies, pick up new subject matter areas quickly, and develop new and improved conceptual frameworks, methodologies and techniques for official statistics. To focus attention on enhancing Statistics New Zealand's capability, goal 6 has been provided.

Outcomes and Initiatives

This section identifies the outcomes (ie results) sought for each of the six strategic goal areas and the initiatives or actions that Statistics New Zealand will be undertaking to achieve the outcomes. Given the number of initiatives, their wide scope, and capability constraints, Statistics New Zealand will not be able to implement all of the initiatives at once. However, it is expected that annual progress will be made towards meeting each strategic goal, although some initiatives will be implemented over the long term.

In each year's business planning round, particular focus may be given to some initiatives. In the first few years of this strategic plan, for example, attention will be given to (1) strengthening the cohesiveness and effectiveness of official statistics, and (2) making official statistics readily accessible and widely available.

When reading the following tables on outcomes and initiatives, note that:

- in some cases, several initiatives may apply to one or more outcomes, and
- the numbering system is to identify the goals, outcomes and initiatives (ie it has not been used for ranking or prioritisation purposes).

1. Strengthen the cohesiveness and effectiveness of official statistics

In this strategic goal area, Statistics New Zealand will be focusing on the system of official statistics as a whole, and encouraging other participants to do likewise. In a cohesive and effective system, official statistics have a greater relevance and they achieve value beyond their immediate use.

Outcomes Statistics New Zealand Seeks	Key Initiatives to Achieve Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A commitment, shared across parliament and its institutions, to the system of official statistics. 2. A more integrated and cohesive system of official statistics. 3. The Statistics Act 1975 and Statistics New Zealand's leadership role within the system is understood by all its participants. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build partnerships and relationships with other system stakeholders, and participate in e-government initiatives. 2. Develop an education programme about official statistics: its principles, participants' roles etc. 3. Establish, with major users of social and economic statistics, agreed core statistical programmes and development priorities. 4. Establish a programme of statistical topic-area reviews. 5. Promote the use of statistical standards and classifications in official statistics. 6. Provide leadership in the management and integration of administrative data. 7. Review and report on the state of the system of official statistics.

2. Build upon the trust that governments, communities and individuals have in official statistics

For official statistics to be trusted and therefore effectively used, they need to be produced using sound statistical methods and practices and be equally accessible to all. Their relevance in a changing and increasingly complex world must also be under continual review, and new information requirements prioritised and addressed.

Outcomes Statistics New Zealand Seeks	Key Initiatives to Achieve Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Official statistics are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● of high integrity and quality ● timely and relevant ● objective and impartial, and ● equally accessible. 2. Best practice statistical policies and practices are applied government-wide. 3. Statistics New Zealand is trusted and recognised as the leader of official statistics in New Zealand. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and improve the quality and relevance of existing statistics, classifications, methodologies etc. 2. Improve user consultation processes. 3. Promote sound statistical principles and practices for official statistics, including those relating to data access, custodianship and dissemination. 4. Evaluate the effectiveness of the <i>Protocols for Official Statistics</i>. 5. Establish and publicise processes for certifying the quality of official statistics. 6. Be a role model in the application of sound statistical practices and standards.

3. Maintain the cooperation of data providers

Maintaining the cooperation of data providers is crucial to the provision of high quality official statistics. Those who provide information to Statistics New Zealand (and to other organisations) must be able to trust us to (1) seek only information that is genuinely required, (2) maintain the security and the confidentiality of the information, and (3) use it only for statistical purposes.

Outcomes Statistics New Zealand Seeks	Key Initiatives to Achieve Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Data providers know that Statistics New Zealand keeps their data secure and confidential. 2. The compliance load associated with Statistics New Zealand's direct surveying activity is minimised. 3. Good relationships between Statistics New Zealand and its data providers. 4. Statistics New Zealand's surveys meet or exceed their target response rates. 5. A commitment government-wide to maintaining the cooperation of data providers and to minimise the overall burden of surveying activity. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote and meet best practice for maintaining data security and confidentiality. 2. Develop a framework for incorporating respondent load considerations into the design and operation of direct surveys. 3. More effectively utilise existing data sources, particularly administrative data. 4. Provide data collection systems and processes that meet the needs of data providers. 5. Develop better information feedback programmes and liaison processes with data providers. 6. Monitor statistical data collection activities and statistical compliance load government-wide.

4. Increase the usage and user understanding of official statistics

To enable the effective usage of existing official statistics, they must be both readily accessible and presented in a manner that is widely understood. Also, given the range of official statistics and the number of agencies producing them, users (including those providing the information) need to be able to easily locate the particular statistics that interest them.

Outcomes Statistics New Zealand Seeks	Key Initiatives to Achieve Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Official statistics are readily accessible and available to all. 2. Greater usage and wider understanding of official statistics. 3. Official statistics are integral to policy decision-making and evaluation processes. 4. Enhanced capacity within communities to use official statistics for their direct benefit. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and maintain an electronic register and mechanism for easy access to government-wide official statistics. 2. Provide and promote products and services that allow timely and equitable access to the latest statistics. 3. Publicise and make readily available the concepts, sources, methodologies and quality of official statistics. 4. Develop innovative ways of effectively communicating information. 5. Maintain publicly acceptable practices for access to and the use of data in statistical analysis, research and policy development. 6. Support the use of official statistics in education.

5. Enable Māori statistical needs to be met

This strategic area gives effect to Statistics New Zealand’s specific undertakings to Māori in respect of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. It recognises that the statistical needs of Māori can differ, and lays the ground for meeting these needs through official statistics and/or through statistics that are produced by the Māori communities themselves. Extending the use of official statistics in Māori communities and assisting Māori communities to build their statistical capability are key to this strategic goal area.

Outcomes Statistics New Zealand Seeks	Key Initiatives to Achieve Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Statistical information that is relevant to Māori. 2. Greater usage of official statistics in Māori communities. 3. Enhanced statistical capability within Māori communities. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a framework for Māori statistics and identify what data is required to populate it. 2. Develop and implement a strategy to improve official statistics for Māori. 3. Develop and implement a strategy for promoting knowledge of, and extending the use of, official statistics in Māori communities. 4. Develop and initiate a pilot programme to support Māori communities in building their own statistical capability.

6. Enhance Statistics New Zealand’s capability

The people within Statistics New Zealand are the key to its success as an organisation. Statistics New Zealand requires highly skilled, well-led and experienced people, as well as effective systems and support processes, to achieve its strategic outcomes and to meet the challenges of a continually changing external environment. In this strategic area four key outcomes are given. The emphasis is on encouraging leadership, productivity and responsiveness.

Outcomes Statistics New Zealand Seeks	Key Initiatives to Achieve Outcomes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Greater capability to lead statistical work within Statistics New Zealand and across government. 2. Stronger leadership capability and a larger pool of successors. 3. The organisational capability to support the Māori responsiveness initiatives. 4. Increased organisational productivity and responsiveness to change. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop processes and tools to build relationship management skills and subject matter expertise. 2. Develop new and improved conceptual frameworks, methodologies and techniques for official statistics. 3. Improve the sharing of expertise and knowledge management practices government-wide and internationally. 4. Develop a model of strategic leadership, and implement supporting strategies and processes. 5. Put in place, within Statistics New Zealand, structures, processes and people that are responsive to Māori. <p><i>continued page 22</i></p>

6. Enhance Statistics New Zealand's capability

continued

Outcomes Statistics New Zealand Seeks	Key Initiatives to Achieve Outcomes - <i>continued</i>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="561 384 857 538">6. Streamline internal processes to improve operational efficiency, flexibility and work prioritisation.<li data-bbox="561 560 866 715">7. Encourage a focus on performance, personal development, learning and continuous improvement.<li data-bbox="561 737 844 824">8. Gain better leverage from technological advances.

Strategic Management

Statistics New Zealand's Strategic Directions 2002 and Beyond is an important part of the strategic management process. In general terms this process can be viewed as developing the strategic plan and then implementing it. However, strategic management is broader than this description, as it incorporates the whole planning, implementation, monitoring and learning/feedback processes of an organisation and it, like the strategic planning process, is dynamic.

As the environment that we live and work in changes, so may elements of this strategic plan. This is because new opportunities and challenges will arise over the next decade, that have not been envisaged in this year's strategic planning process. Each year, as part of our planning work, we will review the strategic plan's outcomes and initiatives, given this changing environment, and some of these may change and/or new ones be established.

However, this strategic plan gives us the high-level directions and framework within which we do our forward work programmes and allocate our resources effectively and efficiently. To make the plan a key driver for Statistics New Zealand's organisational performance and capability, it will be made an integral part of the planning and budgeting processes. These processes will include those done from the overall departmental level right down to the individual performance agreement level of all employees. This means, for example, that each programme area will be developing:

- business and action plans that will have a strong focus on what they will be doing to try and achieve the strategic goals
- performance milestone measures, and
- monitoring, reporting and feedback processes.

Similarly, each employee will be establishing what they will personally be doing to move Statistics New Zealand towards the directions set in this plan.

This work will be undertaken in a coordinated manner so that key organisational priorities are being properly advanced with the appropriate resources being allocated to them.