

Items for discussion and decision: management and modernization of statistical system

**High Level Forum on Official Statistics
DATA STEWARDSHIP - A SOLUTION FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS' PREDICAMENT?**

Monday, 2 March 2020, 3:00 – 6:00 pm

Brief Summary by UNSD

1. Data stewardship has emerged as a response to the increased calls for a) data innovation; b) data collaboration and b) data responsibility. Therefore, data stewardship has different interpretations, but most encompass the notions of deliberate care and management of data, maximizing the value of data and statistics, and building trust and confidence in the data system in particular by citizens.
2. Data stewardship within government frequently focuses on data held by government but is not limited to it. The general objective is to make government and other data available to all users in an open and effective way.
3. The discussants and panelists overall agreed that the role of data steward offers national statistical offices a unique opportunity to maintain and further develop their role and function in the new emerging data ecosystem and data driven economy.
4. In several countries national statistical offices already have the formal function of data steward, but the actual implementation varies. In other countries different approaches and practices that cover certain aspects of data stewardship are emerging.
5. There was agreement that data stewardship entails an evolution from the traditional role of statistical offices as data producers to encompass being data curators and service providers, potentially including the evaluation of outcomes.
6. Participants mentioned multiple practical measures such as the creation of data catalogues, the building of metadata systems and the establishment of interoperability and quality standards as practical implementation steps for a government data system under the guidance of the data steward. Data science and decision science could be additional elements of such system.

7. Several participants identified access to data as an important factor in data stewardship, followed by resources (human and financial) and technical capacity (skills). An appropriate mandate is important to achieving data access, but participants stressed that collaboration, trust, the creation of win-win situations and tangible value are even more essential. Others also stressed the need for a political will of all of government.
8. In the absence of additional funding, statistical offices may need to re-prioritize they activities to take on this additional function. It was also stressed that statistical offices should lead by example and would need to change their culture and operations to embrace this new role alongside the traditional statistical production processes.
9. Participants agreed that data stewardship entails numerous ethical challenges for statistical offices, which are frequently the side-effect of the collaboration on data with others. These challenges need to be addressed in a practical way such as for example the creation of an advisory group.
10. Participants agreed that the global statistical systems has an important role in supporting national statistical offices in becoming data stewards such as by professionalizing this function through-peer-to-peer learning, by developing partnerships with global companies, by developing a own new data ecosystem, by developing best practices, guidance and standards, by fostering the use of data sciences, through the communication and demonstration of the value, through dialogue with policy makers to generate support or through specific projects.
11. The Statistical Commission will have the opportunity to identify the way forward on how to address the role of the NSO in the new data ecosystem.
