

## **Governance and Engagement from the perspective of an NSO**

### **Statistics Canada**

The increasing globalization of communication, production and consumption means that internationally comparable statistics are more important now than at any time in our history. NSOs need to devote significant resources to ensure that their domestic users are well served by a set of information that helps them understand and analyze their society, economy and environment in the broader global context. The role of international organizations is also starting to evolve. In addition to coordinating the development of conceptual frameworks, classification systems, and the exchange of best practices and provision of technical assistance IAs are being looked at to develop integrated global databases such as the TiVA database, the coordinated portfolio investment survey or the UN trade database.

Users are requiring NSOs and IAs to react more quickly to their data needs. The overwhelming response from NSOs and IAs has been to be more reactive. This is good and needs to continue but a stock-taking is needed to ensure that, in our desire to be more responsive and expand our roles, we avoid duplication, inefficiencies and are addressing the correct priorities.

Currently there are a number of high-level 'data priorities' that both NSOs and IAs tackling. These priorities include (among others):

- Digitalization
- Globalization
- Financial Security/Stability
- Sustainable Development Goals
- Well-being and measures of inequality
- The environment and sustainability

One question that we need to address is whether we have the appropriate governance and engagement in place to ensure that we can collectively make progress on these priority areas of development. In order to stimulate the discussion Statistics Canada has undertaken an analysis of its international engagement activities. The following tables highlight the degree of Statistics Canada's engagement over the last year. The first table breaks out Statistics Canada's interactions by type of engagement. The second table examines Statistics Canada's engagement by theme.

The first table shows that Statistics Canada had over 200 engagements with other NSOs and international agencies in the past year. The interactions have been broken out into the following categories:

**Advisory Committees / Associations** – these are groups where Statistics Canada sits on a ‘bureau’ or ‘board of directors’ helping to establish global agendas and priorities. These tend to be on-going and intensive commitments.

**Data collaboration** – these are engagements where Statistics Canada reports or shares data either with another NSO or with an international agency. These groups may or may not meet over the course of a given year. The provision of information represents a significant level of resources.

**Expert Groups** – These are on-going theme-based groups where Statistics Canada experts play an active role engaging with International organizations and other countries sharing best practices and ideas.

**Task Forces** – These are temporary groups that have been established to examine a specific topic and provide international guidance or develop new international standards.

As can be seen most of the engagements are in the areas of task teams and expert groups where members from international agencies and NSOs work together to discuss and develop new concepts, methods and statistical frameworks.

**Table 1: Statistics Canada engagements by type.**

Type of Group	Number of engagements
Advisory Committee	22
Data collaboration	28
Expert Group	63
Task Force	99
Other	12
Total	224

*(these data have been extracted from Statistics Canada International cooperation database)*

While the preceding table highlights the amount of interaction by Statistics Canada it is difficult to determine whether this level of engagement is appropriate, whether there is duplication or inefficiency and whether the priority areas are being addressed.

Table 2 breaks out the same set of engagements by theme. The category “statistical infrastructure” was used to identify those engagements where the primary focus was on the development of statistical infrastructure that would touch across several themes. Examples includes groups that have been established to oversee the development of a classification system (CPC, ISIC). The remaining engagements were classified to the primary theme being addressed by the group (such as agriculture, transportation, the environment).

The ‘theme’ with the most engagement relates to statistical infrastructure. This is expected given the primary need of NSOs is the development of broad statistical frameworks that ensure

international comparability and coherence. Other areas where the agency is ‘well-engaged’ is the Environment, Education, SDGs, Transportation and Well-being, inequality and poverty.

**Table 2: Engagements by Theme**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Number of engagements</b>
Agriculture	7
Census and Population	7
Digital	3
Disability	2
Education and Skills	13
Energy	3
Environment	20
Financial Statistics	3
Gender	5
International Trade and Globalization	6
Health	8
ICT	6
Indigenous	1
Justice	2
Labour	4
Migration	2
National Accounts	6
Prices	3
Sustainable Development Goals	10
Statistical Infrastructure	79
Tourism and Culture	4
Transportation	15
Well-being, Inequality and poverty	12

It is evident, at least from Statistics Canada’s perspective that the key priority areas are being addressed by NSOs and international agencies. Digitalization, globalization, well-being, the environment, SDGs are all prominent in the list.

The results also demonstrate that there are many groups discussing similar topics (20 twenty groups are discussing environmental statistical developments; 15 groups are discussing various dimensions related to transportation statistics). It is hard to argue that there is not some duplication that has entered the system. For example, there are discussions about well-being taking place within the inter-secretariat group on national accounts (ISWGNA). There are also well-being discussions taking place within the context of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and household survey fora. Multiple groups are discussing digitalization and globalization. How do we ensure there is no overlap in work and that the work of each group draws complementary and coherent conclusions?

We acknowledge that the International agencies and their bureaus, steering committees and advisory committees (who head up and act as the secretariat for these groups) do a good job coordinating among themselves to ensure minimal overlap. The question is whether the current approach is sustainable moving forward as the intensity and need for global collaboration increases.