

Pacific Business Register Development Guide



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Statistics

Pacific Business Register Development Guide

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Preface

This guide is jointly produced by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as part of their effort to provide leadership for statistical development in Pacific Island countries and territories (PICTs).

It is a broad guide to assist the development and improvement of business registers in national statistical offices (NSOs) in PICTs, to ensure that:

- a) development progresses according to global best practice; and
- b) development occurs consistently and harmoniously within the Pacific region to allow better statistical comparability across borders and future cooperation between NSOs in the region.

Business structural information is the starting point for economic and business statistical collections, so the business register is a crucial piece of central infrastructure for the operation of an efficient and coherent suite of statistics.

The way this guide is applied to local situations will depend on a number of factors, including:

- the standing of the NSO in the business community and the willingness of businesses to cooperate in the production of statistics;
- the level of mutuality between government agencies;
- the level of non-observed activity in the local economy; and
- the structure and operation of local tax and regulations.

This manual refers to general business register practices used by NSOs throughout the world, many of whom work according to the recommendations of the Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers.

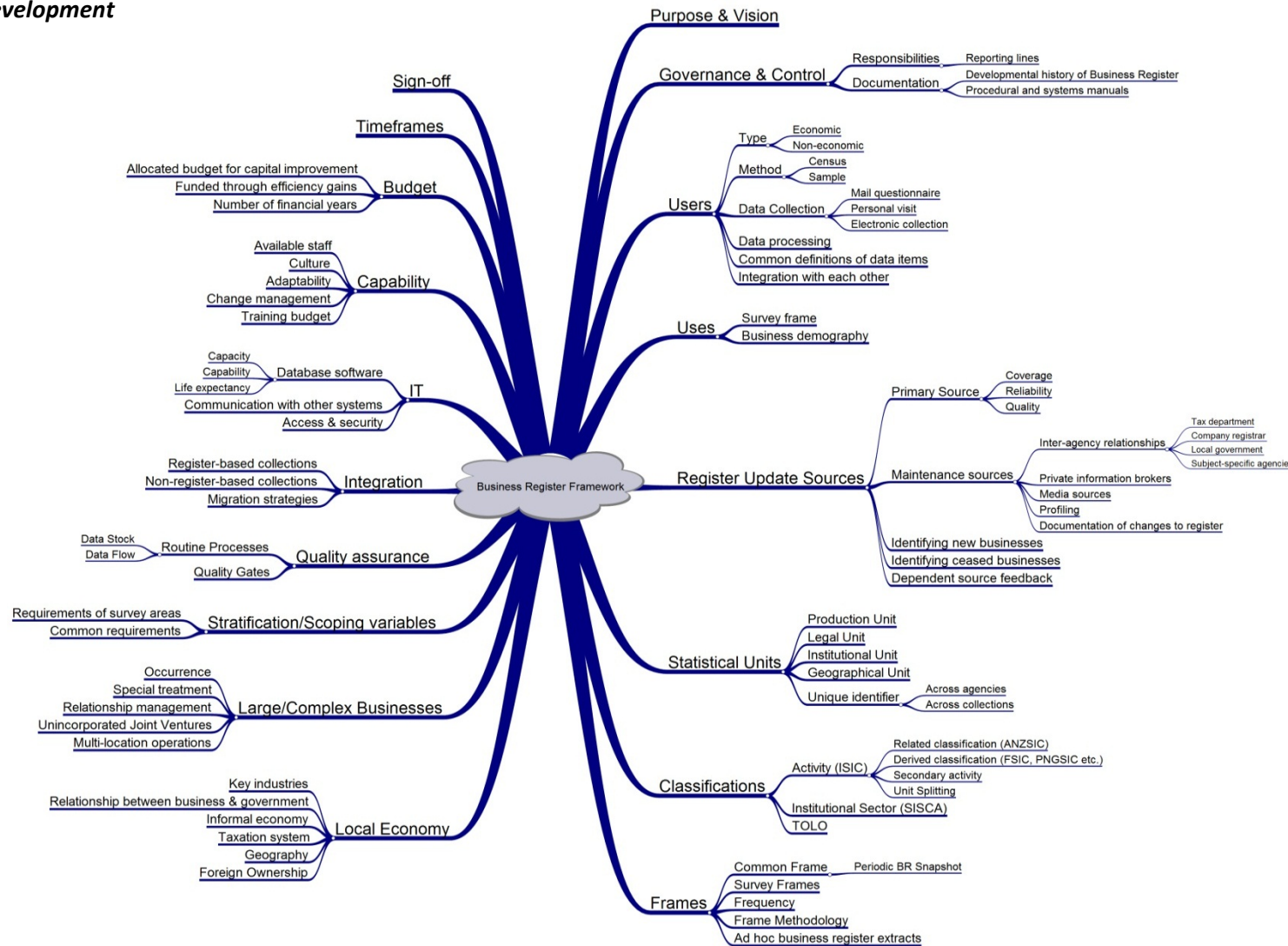
Not every recommendation in this manual will be suitable for all Pacific Island countries and territories, and some of the information will need to be adapted to suit local circumstances.

Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the executive team of the Business Register Unit at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) for their review of this manual.

Views expressed in this manual are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community or the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

**Figure 1: A framework
for business register
development**



This framework describes the broad concepts to consider in the development of a new integrated business register or the improvement of an existing business register.

The logical starting point is at the top right, establishing a **purpose** and **vision** for the business register.

Notes:

Throughout this guide, when discussing governance arrangements, the term *business register manager* is used. This refers to an individual within the organisation who has the ultimate responsibility for the business register. As the roles and responsibilities vary across PICTs, this should be interpreted according to position titles and reporting arrangements relevant to the local NSOs.

Similarly, the term *business register unit* is used, which assumes that the business register functions autonomously within the organisation. It should be interpreted according to local corporate structure and terminology.

Key to abbreviations

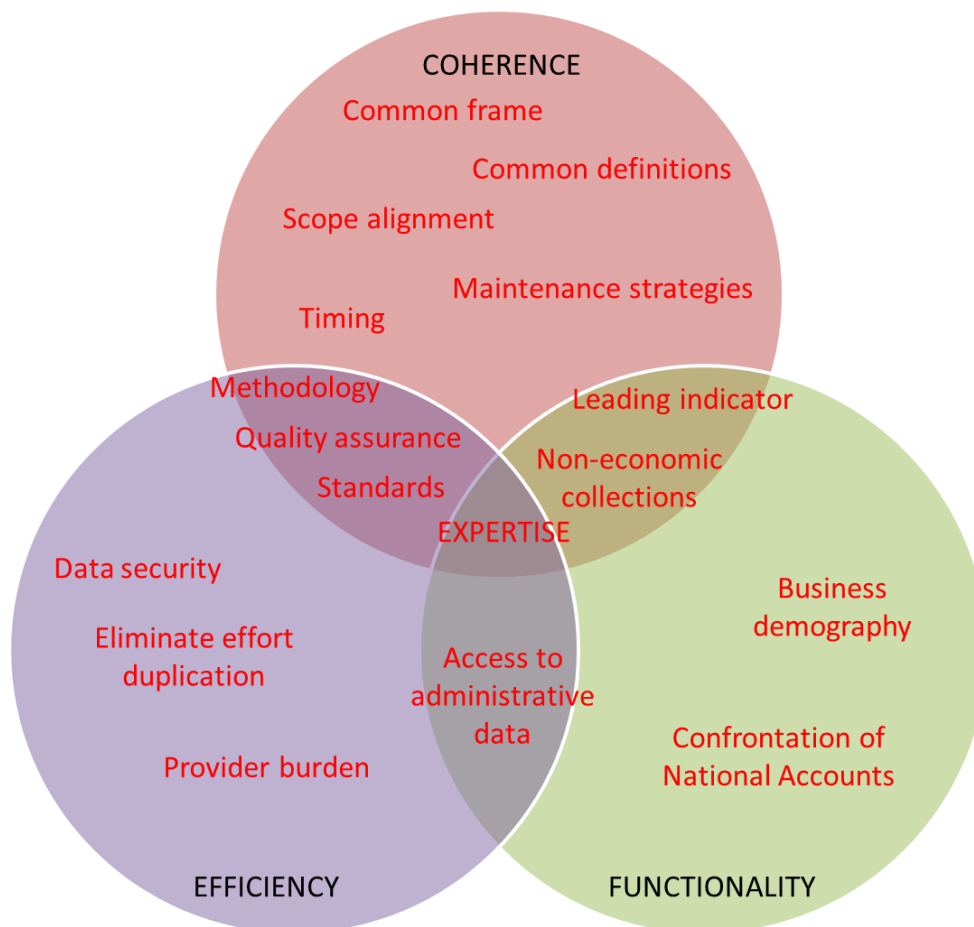
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ANZSIC	Australia and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification
FSIC	Fiji Standard Industrial Classification
GIS	Geographical Information System
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification
IT	Information technology
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NA	National Accounts
NSO	National Statistical Office
PICTs	Pacific Island Countries and Territories
QG	Quality Gate
SNA	System of National Accounts
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
TOLO	Type of Legal Organisation

1. What is a business register?

A business register, in its simplest form, is a confidential list of businesses that are participating in a formal¹ economy, with structural and classification information about each business. The register should provide accurate, up-to-date and consistent frames to be used for business-related statistical collections, and allow a range of collections to have consistently identified and classified units.

2. The need for a central business register

Figure 2: Advantages of having a central business register



Note: This diagram is reproduced in Appendix D, with an explanation for each term.

2.1 Coherence

When economic collections produce their own independent frames, or have their own independent frame maintenance strategies, the outputs of concurrent statistical collections – even where each is

¹ The formal economy consists of institutional units that produce goods and services in accordance with the local business registration and taxation laws. This contrast with the non-observed economy, which comprises underground, illegal, informal, and household production for own final use, and is generally outside the scope of business registers due to the difficulty in identifying participants. Measurement of the non-observed economy is discussed in Measuring the non-observed economy – A Handbook, available at www.oecd.org/std/na/1963116.pdf

of a high standard of quality in its own right – may not all tell the same story, as they have not been based on consistent interpretations of the real world.

The principal advantage of a centralised business register is the consistency in identifying and classifying businesses in an economy across a range of statistical subject matter areas. This alleviates under-coverage and overlap in survey data used for the compilation of national accounts (NA) and other statistics and hence allows for better quality and more realistic information to be delivered to governments (and other users) for policy and planning decisions.

2.2 Efficiency

Having centralised infrastructure for recording business structures allows many aspects of the statistical cycle to run more efficiently, and with less duplication of effort. Procedures for quality assurance, economic standards, classifications, frame methodology, and data security can be done centrally.

Collecting data from business providers is also more efficient, as it enables sharing of data between survey areas, which can reduce business provider burden.

2.3 Functionality

An integrated business register allows the organisation to develop new capabilities, such as the ability to produce economy-wide business demography statistics. This might not be possible in a decentralised system.

3. Governance and control

The confidentiality of the business register, and the authority to collect structural information to populate the register, is governed by a legal framework, such as a statistics act, in all PICTs.

3.1 Strategic planning

Creating a set of corporate documents specific to the business register will ensure that staff and stakeholders have a common understanding of the purpose, operations, and context of the business register, and are inspired to work as a team towards achieving its business goals – both long-term aspirational goals and short-term operational goals.

In Appendix C, there is a template that PICTs can use as a starting point in creating:

- a vision statement – defining what the business register aspires to be;
- a mission statement – defining the fundamental purpose and primary objectives of the business register, and its environmental context;
- values – setting out beliefs that are shared among the staff and stakeholders of the business register;
- strategic direction – setting out where the business register wants to be in three or four years, how it will get there, and how its success will be measured.

For most organisations, these key documents already exist at a corporate level, but creating a set of documents specific to the business register will bring corporate principles down to the local level, making them more accessible and relevant to operational staff and line management.

The business register planning documents should be created in close harmony with those of the wider organisation. Also, involving the business register operational staff in the creation of these documents will promote ownership of the underlying principles.

3.2 Documentation

3.2.1 History of register development

A documented, universally-agreed history of the development of the business register within the context of its environment will assist in retaining corporate knowledge throughout changes in staffing. This can be continuously added to/updated as further developments take place. It is particularly important to include the reasons why significant decisions have been made.

3.2.2 Definitions of data items

All metadata need to be defined and described.

Concepts and definitions of data items for the business register, and those used by its sources and clients, should be consistent. Where definitions cannot be harmonised, the differences need to be clearly explained and documented.

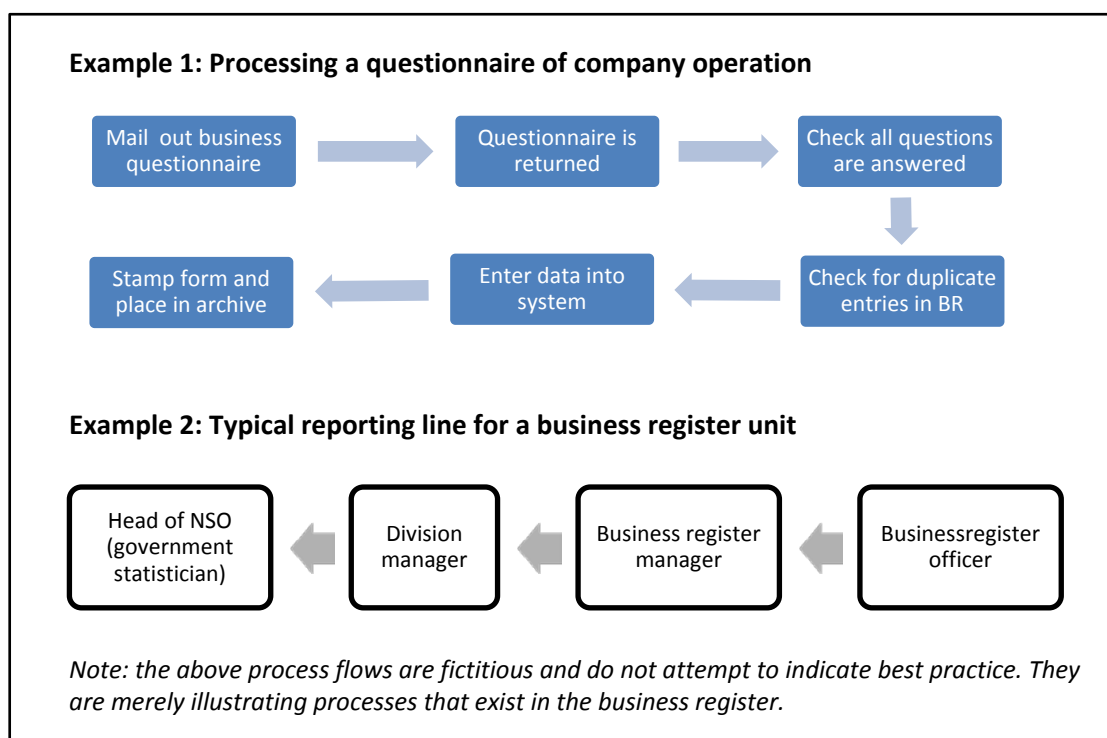
A list of common core business register data items is in Appendix A.

3.2.3 Business process mapping

High-level process maps for the business register will help staff to better understand complex concepts, information flows, and their role in the context of the statistical cycle. Process maps are also an effective and simple way of communicating business register processes, ideas, and innovations to senior managers and external stakeholders without over-complication.

Some examples of how process maps might be used are given in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Business process maps



3.2.4 Business register manual

PICTs that develop and operate a business register should produce their own business register manual that describes:

- the purpose of the business register;
- fundamental concepts, such as the statistical units model (which is discussed in section 6) and the standards and classifications that have been used;
- a description of the data sources used to populate and update the business register;
- step-by-step procedures for collecting and editing data;
- step-by-step procedures for using the business register database (how to view data and tables, edit data, add new enterprises and establishments, search the business register, extract data, and so on);
- when and how common frame snapshots will be produced;
- how the quality of the business register will be assured and reported;
- reviews of the business register.

The manual should also include the latest versions of the questionnaires and forms that are used to collect business register information. Examples of these questionnaires and forms are shown in Appendix E.

3.3 Access to data

Data should be stored and processed in a single location, to prevent its proliferation throughout the organisation, and to reduce the risk of sensitive data being misused or accidentally released outside the organisation. The business register manager² will be ultimately responsible for ensuring that the terms and conditions, under which data are supplied, including the secure transfer of the data into the organisation, are followed.

3.4 Formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) for accessing administrative data

The reliability of source data is important for continuity of the business register and the downstream components of the economic statistics programme. For this reason, it is important that access to administrative data is facilitated through a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU), negotiated between agency heads, and that the associated governance protocols are followed carefully.

The MOU should cover:

- the conditions under which the data can be used;
- the obligations of the statistical agency;
- the frequency at which the data will be supplied;
- the agreed level of quality of the supplied data.

In negotiating access to administrative data, it is important to consider the perspective of the provider organisation, and put forward a value proposition which demonstrates how the provider, too, can benefit by participating in an MOU. This may include the provision of analysis services back to the provider, collaboration on data improvements, and the provision of training to the staff of the provider organisation.

² Refer to note on page viii.

3.5 Custodianship

The business register manager is the custodian of the raw structural data from providers, as well as the value-added data and final outputs produced by the business register. It is the responsibility of the business register manager to ensure that access to business register data is provided only to those staff who have an immediate need to use it. All new requests for access to the business register should be endorsed by the business register manager.

Business register outputs would normally be in the form of survey frames. Any requests for *ad hoc* extracts from the register need to be approved by the business register manager.

3.6 Responsibility for quality of business register

The quality of the business register is the responsibility of the business register manager. Output should be subject to a formal clearance process, involving stakeholders and senior management, before being considered fit for use.

3.7 Change and risk management

Changes to business register concepts, methodologies and processing systems can affect the quality or timeliness of the business register outputs. These changes should be subject to a change management process, to ensure that risks to downstream processes and products are known and appropriately managed. The business register manager is responsible for ensuring that change management processes are in place and followed, and he/she needs to sign off any changes to business register concepts, methodologies or systems.

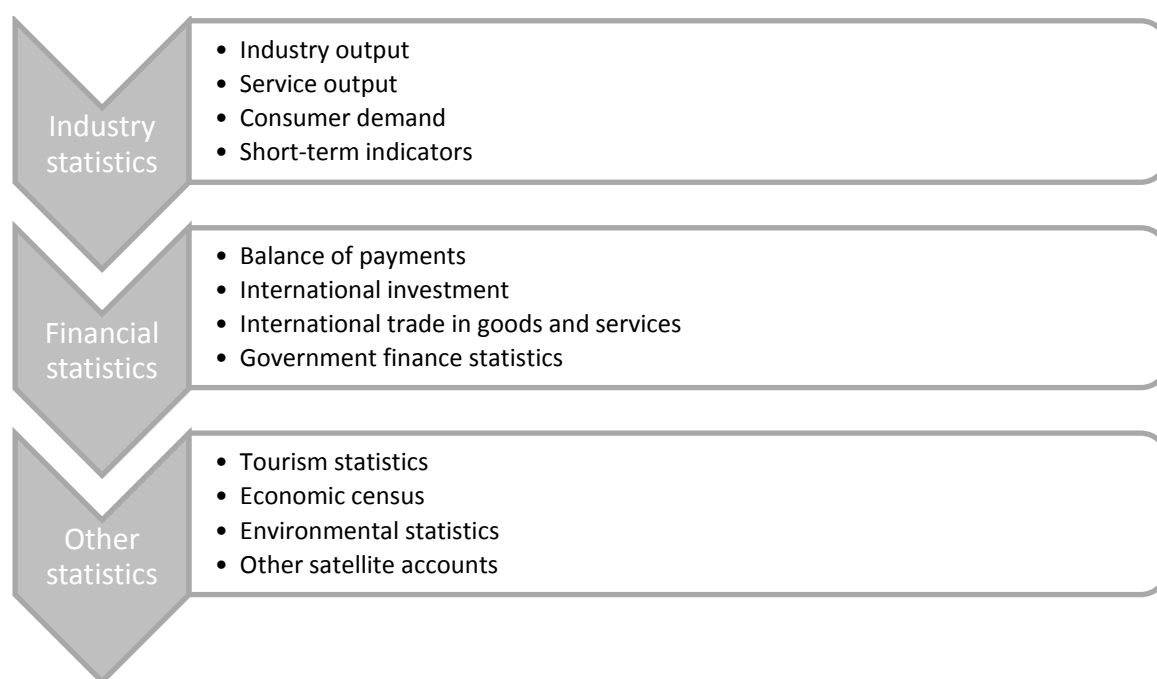
3.8 Migrating decentralised business registers to the central business register

Around the world, NSOs are moving from having decentralised business registers (that is, where each statistical collection maintains its own business register) to having a single, centralised business register, from which each collection can scope its survey frames.

Ideally, all survey areas will begin using the central business register in the same period, as this will allow the greatest coherence across the collections. However, in some PICTs there may not be the resources and capabilities to migrate all collections to a central business register at the same time. In these cases, there needs to be a long-term strategy that defines the sequence in which statistical collections will start using the central business register. An example of a possible sequence is shown in Figure 4.

The business register manager plays an important role in forming and implementing this strategy, and needs to engage and communicate with the survey areas to ensure that the central business register will meet the needs of each survey area.

Figure 4: An example of the strategic sequence of migrating collections to the central business register



4. Uses of the business register

The business register exists primarily to supply survey frames for all business collections. It provides a means of:

- coordinating the coverage of business surveys;
- achieving consistency in classifying statistical reporting units; and
- monitoring and minimising the burden on business providers.

It also serves as the main source of business demography. It keeps track of:

- business creations;
- closures; and
- structural changes brought about by mergers, take-overs, break-ups, split-offs and restructuring.

Ultimately, a business register is a central piece of statistical infrastructure, which can be used not only as a list of businesses for survey frames but also in its own right as a leading economic indicator and a source of business demography.

5. Users of the business register

5.1 Direct users

Statistical collections across the NSOs will be able to use the central business register to create their survey frames. Some examples of the areas within a typical PICT NSO that would benefit from a central business register are given in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Areas of NSOs that could use the central business register

Subject matter area:	Uses the central business register for:
Production statistics	Identifying and characterising establishments that produce goods and services
Labour statistics	Identifying and characterising enterprises that have employees
Tourism statistics	Identifying and characterising establishments that operate with the tourism industry
Research and development statistics	Identifying and characterising enterprises that undertake research and development
Environmental statistics	Identifying and characterising establishments with certain environmental attributes
International trade statistics	Identifying and characterising enterprises that trade internationally in goods and services
Government statistics	Identifying and characterising enterprises that belong to the government sector

There is also the potential for the business register to produce its own statistics on business demography, including counts of businesses by industry, and identification of new and ceased businesses.

5.2 Indirect users

Subject matter area:	Uses the business register for:
National accounts	The outputs of many statistical collections are used in the compilation of national accounts. Unusual movements or changes in national accounts can often be caused by changes in survey frames. National accounts staff will be able to query the business register to investigate major changes that might have contributed to these movements, and be better able to explain unusual figures.

6. Statistical units model

Because businesses vary in their legal and accounting structures, a standard model needs to be used to define, identify, and classify businesses consistently. The System of National Accounts (SNA) identifies the most important characteristics of businesses as:

- institutional sector** (which describes its economic function);
- industry** (which describes what goods and services it produces); and
- geographic location** (which describes the physical location of the production).

Statistical units are the measurable units of economic activity, and allow economic activity to be classified and aggregated consistently.

A statistical units model provides definitions of the statistical units used, describes the relationships between the statistical unit types, and identifies the information held about each type of unit on the business register. They form the basis for establishing and maintaining business structures on the business register for use in statistical collections.

A statistical units model will accommodate businesses that vary greatly in:

- size – as measured by employment, turnover, or geographical representation;
- complexity – in both legal structure, and diversity of activity;
- accounting practices – such as frequency of reporting, availability of particular data items, and adherence to accounting standards.

A statistical units model will allow consistency in treatment across subject matter areas and reference periods, as well as better coordination across collections. Undercounting or duplication will be avoided.

6.1 Establishments

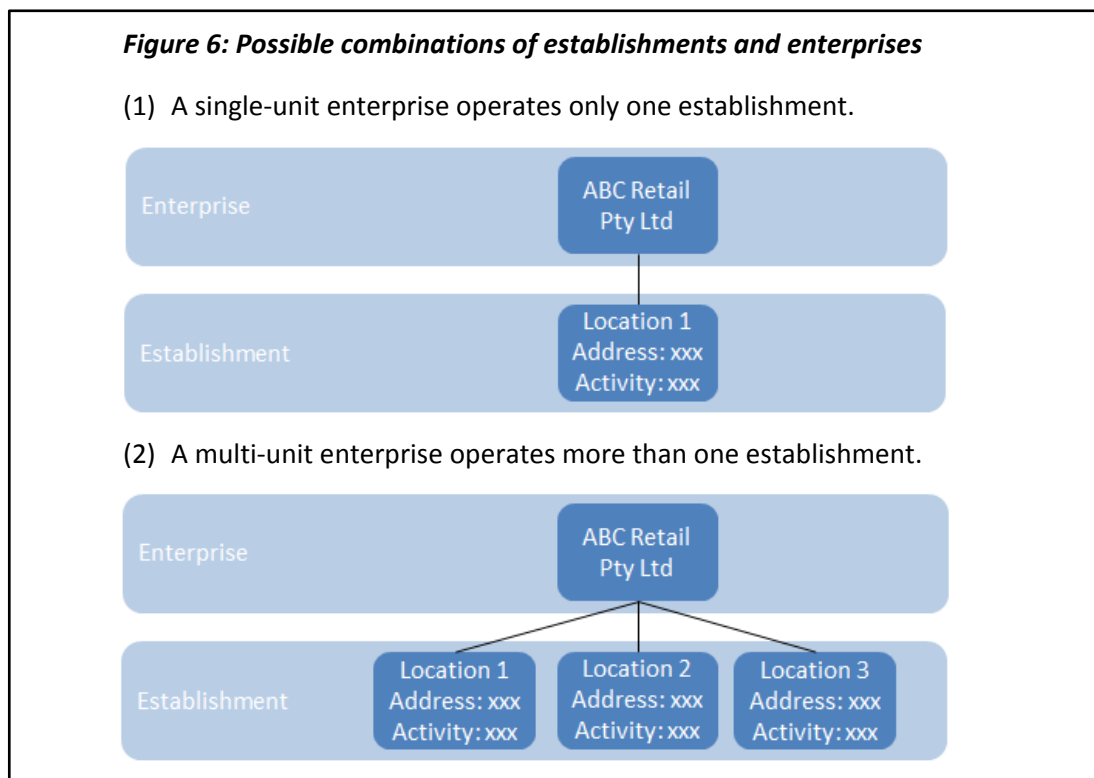
An establishment is the most basic economic statistical unit, and is defined as having a single ownership, a single economic activity, and a single physical location.

6.2 Enterprises

An enterprise is a statistical unit that consists of a legal entity that operates one or more establishments.

6.3 The relationship between establishments and enterprises

There are only two possible conceptual combinations of establishments and enterprises; these are given in Figure 6.



7. Classifications

To allow consistent treatment of businesses across economic collections, and for cross-border comparisons, standard classifications are used to describe units on the business register according to their productive economic activity, legal status, and institutional sector.

7.1 Classifying by industry

Establishments are classified according to their main activity. The United Nations has published the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), which is used widely. However, many statistical organisations nationalise ISIC to suit the unique nature of their local economic activity.

Links to ISIC and several related and derived classifications are in Appendix F.

7.1.1 Secondary activity

In some cases, a single statistical unit might have more than one activity. The way these are treated in the business register depends on the requirements of economic collections and the record-keeping practices of the provider (that is, whether separate accounts are available for the secondary activity).

Based on these factors, statistical units can be classified in different ways:

- 1) according to their most significant activity only; or
- 2) according to their most significant activity, with the secondary activity (and its % contribution) recorded on the unit record.

Alternatively, separate statistical units can be created for each activity provided that the business can report that way.

The approach taken also depends on the technical capacity of the register itself, and improvements may need to be undertaken to accommodate secondary activity. In any case, a consistent approach needs to be adopted in accounting for secondary activity.

For a fuller explanation of the treatment of secondary and ancillary activities, refer to ISIC. There is a link to this manual in Appendix F.

7.2 Classifying by type of legal organisation (TOLO)

Businesses can also be classified according to their type of legal organisation.

Because legal systems differ across jurisdictions throughout the Pacific region, a separate TOLO classification needs to be developed for each unique legal environment. As TOLO is a classification of real-world entities, it is worth consulting with other government agencies (e.g. the tax office or registrar of companies) to ensure that classifications align with those used across government.

Figure 7 lists some examples of the types of legal organisations common in the Pacific region. This is not an exhaustive list or a standard classification, but serves to demonstrate the way that a TOLO code describes business types.

Figure 7: Types of legal organisations common in the Pacific region

Type	Definition
Sole trader	A sole trading business is an unincorporated business owned and controlled by one person. The owner may be a working proprietor or may employ people. A sole trader is responsible for all the debts of the business.
Partnership	A partnership is an unincorporated business owned by two or more people. Partners are responsible for the debts of the business.
Private limited company	A private registered company that has a separate legal identity from its members (i.e. shareholders), and whose ownership is private. It may issue stock and have shareholders but their shares do not trade on the public exchange and are not issued through an initial public offering.
Public limited company	A public registered company that has a separate legal identity from its shareholders, and whose ownership can be freely sold and traded to the public.
Government-owned trading entity	A central government trading business that may be registered as any legal character under a parliamentary act, or may be set up by act of parliament, or may be a division of a department.
Societies and associations	Small, non-commercial community groups, such as sporting clubs, social groups, political groups, arts groups and environmental groups.
Consulates and foreign embassies	A permanent diplomatic delegation established within the country by a foreign nation.
Branch of a company incorporated overseas	A branch of a foreign-incorporated company that is operating in the country.
etc.	etc.

In developing a TOLO classification, it is recommended that all types are mutually exclusive, so that each entity can be classified to one class only³.

7.3 Classifying by institutional sector

A standard institutional sector classification describes units based on their economic function, including:

- the way entities interact with markets; and
- the way entities respond to fiscal and monetary forces.

This effectively divides the economy into institutional sectors, and groups together economic units which have similar economic functions.

A standard institutional sector classification is described in Figure 8.

³ In some PICTs, a co-operative can also be a limited liability company. However, many PICT NSOs prefer to have a distinct TOLO class for co-operatives, because of the existence of a ministry or department of co-operatives, which manages the registration and oversees the business of co-operatives. Caution should therefore be exercised by PICTs to have consistent standards for applying the classification, and not to double-count any units.

Figure 8: Institutional sector classification

Sectors	What the sectors include
Non-financial corporations	Non-financial investment funds Other non-financial corporations
Financial corporations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reserve bank ▪ commercial banks ▪ other depository corporations ▪ superannuation funds ▪ life insurance corporations ▪ non-life insurance corporations ▪ money market funds ▪ non-money market financial investment funds ▪ securitisers⁴ ▪ other financial intermediaries ▪ financial auxiliaries ▪ central borrowing authorities ▪ money lenders and other captive⁵ financial institutions
General government	General government
Non-profit institutions serving households	Not-for-profit institutions serving households
Households	Households
Rest of the world ⁶	Rest of the world

Source: SNA 2008.

7.4 Classifying by geographical location of businesses

Modern statistical data usage has created a demand for greater geospatial capability for business registers. Business addresses, mailing addresses and postal codes may already exist on the register for logistical purposes. However, as the geospatial capability increases, finer-level geographical descriptions can be stored on the register, ranging from relatively broad classifications, such as states, provinces or islands, all the way down to fine-level classifications such as electoral divisions, suburbs, postal codes, or even latitude-longitude coordinates.

⁴ Securitised are financial institutions that pool various types of assets, such as residential mortgages, and package them as collateral backing for bonds or short-term debt securities (referred to as asset-backed securities), which are then sold to investors.

⁵ Captives are units characterised by having a balance sheet that holds financial assets, usually on behalf of other companies. Normally established by their parent unit for a specific and limited purpose, captives typically have little or no employment or operations, and usually do not undertake significant production.

⁶ On occasions, it is convenient to refer to non-resident households or corporations as units that are resident in the rest of the world. Whenever accounts are drawn up for institutional sectors, as well as an account for the total economy, a further account is shown showing the relationship with the rest of the world. In effect, therefore, transactions with the rest of the world are recorded as if the rest of the world is a *de facto* sixth sector (4.37 of SNA 2008).

Where PICTs organisations have a developed geographical classification system (say, for determining population census enumeration areas), it makes sense to use this same classification in the business register.

The geographical classification codes are then linked to the establishment number (refer to Appendix A), so that each establishment can be viewed using a mapping tool.

8. Sources

The business register can be based on data collected by the statistical organisation, and/or administrative data sourced from other organisations. Because the quality of the business register affects the quality of many downstream products, including statistical surveys that are used in compiling national accounts, the sources used to compile and maintain the business register require careful consideration. These sources should be assessed in accordance with the organisation's usual standards for data quality, and should address the following attributes:

- relevance (scope, reference period, level of detail, classification standards);
- timeliness (frequency, timing relative to processing and outputs);
- accuracy (quality standards employed by the source organisation);
- coherence (comparison across data items, comparison across time periods);
- interpretability (availability of assistance and explanatory information); and
- accessibility (ongoing availability).

Business register sources can be generally grouped into three types⁷:

- 1) primary sources – used to identify businesses;
- 2) secondary sources – used to describe the characteristics of businesses; and
- 3) tertiary sources – used to provide transactional information about businesses.

Each of these will be discussed in turn.

8.1 Primary sources

The primary source is used to *identify* businesses. This should reflect businesses that are distinguishable⁸, unique⁹, and tangible¹⁰.

The source may be a direct collection, such as a periodic economic census, or from administrative data (such as a company registrar or tax office). When administrative sources are used, a formal MOU should be in place to ensure that the source data are timely and reliable, and meet the agreed quality standards.

Using a single primary source will reduce the likelihood of duplicate entries on the business register.

If it is possible, adopt the same unique unit identifier that is used by the primary source (for example, if the primary source is a data file from the tax department, then use the tax identification number as the unique identifier). This will allow more efficient and accurate processing of subsequent updates, as processing can be automated using one-to-one matches for each record.

⁷ There are very few (if any) business registers in the world that have all of these capabilities. As long as there is a reliable primary source that can identify distinguishable, unique and tangible businesses across the economy, a working business register can be created. It might begin as a simple register, but as the business register develops, and reliable data sources become available, secondary and tertiary sources can be integrated.

⁸ Distinguishable means that the business is a separate legal entity, distinct from its owners.

⁹ Unique means that the business should be identified only once.

¹⁰ Tangible means that the business needs to be one that interacts with the real world, and is not purely a legal construct.

If this is not possible, then a unique business number should be assigned by the business register manager for each unit record.

It is also preferable that users of the business register adopt the same unique identifiers in their own frames and collections.

8.2 Secondary sources

Secondary sources are used to *describe* and *characterise* the businesses that are identified from the primary source. This includes attributes such as:

- life status (is the business operating, dormant or ceased);
- relative size (number of employees, turnover, etc.);
- type of business entity (company, sole proprietor, etc.);
- ownership (local, foreign);
- location (physical location, mail address, state, province, etc.); and
- contact information.

Potential secondary sources include:

- profiling – making contact directly with businesses to obtain structural information, through a questionnaire on company operations (refer to Appendix E), or a personal visit. A detailed discussion on profiling is in Section 9;
- administrative data – business information from local government authorities, registrars, industry bodies, authorities and local governments;
- publicly available information – including company statutory reports, daily newspapers, telephone/business directories, stock exchange announcements and company websites; and
- survey feedback.

8.3 Tertiary sources

Tertiary sources are used to *enhance* unit-level data by including information such as volume data, balance sheet data, financial performance data and payroll data.

This is advanced business register functionality, which first requires a strong primary source and well-developed capability in assessing, acquiring and implementing secondary sources.

The conceptual model of business register sources (see Appendix B) is a visual summary of primary, secondary and tertiary data sources.

8.4 Administrative data

Using administrative data to populate and update the business register allows one to access more detailed data, while also reducing the cost of collecting and the burden on respondents.

The sources and types of administrative data vary across PICTs, so a comprehensive list of sources is not prescribed. Instead, examples of the kinds of administrative sources that might be available to update the business register, and the potential use of each source, are given in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Examples of administrative data

Source	Uses
Registrar of companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying new businesses identifying ceased businesses
Tax office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying businesses sizing measures (total income, total wages and salaries) type of tax obligation
National provident funds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying businesses business employment details sizing measures (wages and salaries, number of employees)
Local government authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying new businesses identifying ceased businesses
Co-operatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying newly-registered co-operatives identifying ceased co-operatives
Hotel associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> registered hotels operating in the country
Business/Telephone directory office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying businesses identifying business telephone numbers identifying physical locations or mailing address of businesses
Government gazette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifying new businesses

NOTE: When multiple administrative sources are used together, there will be situations where the information is not consistent across sources. In these cases, the structural details should be confirmed with the business before being inserted in the business register.

8.5 Leadership in the integration of administrative data sources

Some countries have a single business identification number across government, allowing businesses to deal with a range of government agencies using the same unique identifier.

When using administrative data for statistics, this makes the process of matching records with other agencies much more efficient: records can be 'hard-matched' (that is, 1-to-1 matching using unique identifiers), rather than matching based on name and address.

It also means that business data collected across agencies will be more consistent and comparable. For example, a business reporting to the tax office and also to the national provident fund will report more consistent data, as there is more certainty that they are referring to the same entity. If these data sources later feed into the business register through an MOU, then the cross-agency consistency will also lead to a more accurate register.

Many PICTs do not yet have a single identifier in place. The NSO could well be the agency that benefits most from this, so there is a very real opportunity for the NSO to take the lead in establishing a unique business identifier by gathering support from other government agencies and presenting a case to the government to have one introduced. The business register, particularly, will be able to assist in providing estimates of the statistical improvements this will bring.

9. Profiling

Profiling is the analysis of the legal, operational and accounting structures of businesses in order to delineate their real-world activities and functions according to the statistical units model (see Section 6). This analysis is then used to create a statistical structure for the collection of survey data.

Profiling takes place through direct engagement with businesses, which can include personal visits, telephone calls, electronic communication, or a mail questionnaire (a sample questionnaire is shown in Appendix E).

9.1 Why profile?

Where combinations of administrative data are used to identify and characterise businesses in the register, the true complexity of certain businesses will often not be captured. Profiling is a manual intervention to ensure that the complex real-world structure of these businesses is properly represented in the business register. This helps to prevent or reduce undercoverage or double-counting that results from poorly-understood business structures.

9.2 Which businesses should be profiled?

The units that benefit most from profiling are those that represent the larger businesses in the economy. This is because:

- a) they are generally more likely to have complex multi-establishment structures, as shown in Figure 6(2); and
- b) they contribute large proportions of the output of their industry, and so there is a high concentration of statistical risk.

Single-unit enterprises, as shown in Figure 6(1), may not need to be profiled in cases where an administrative data source can adequately and reliably capture the real-world structure and activities of the business.

Profiling provides the best source of business structure information, as it is directly collected for statistical purposes (as opposed to administrative data, which is collected for other purposes and adapted for statistical purposes). Due to resource constraints and the sheer number of businesses, some countries cannot profile every business, and so profiling is limited to the larger and more complex businesses.

Many PICTs, however, will be able to profile every business.

9.3 What information is collected for profiling?

The data collected for business profiling vary, depending on the information already held from administrative sources, and the scoping requirements of the survey areas. However, some common types of information that will be collected include:

- a list of commonly-owned legal entities;
- a list of establishments the business operates;
- the primary (and any secondary) activity undertaken by each establishment;
- links between enterprises and establishments within the business;
- some sizing measures for each establishment, such as employment headcount or turnover;
- contact details of the people who can provide the required data (e.g. the financial controller for financial data, and perhaps the operations manager for production data, and so on).

Appendix A gives a fuller description of some of the data items that might be collected.

9.4 How often should business profiles be updated?

How frequently a business should be profiled is largely determined by its tendency to change structure and activities. For example, large conglomerates, which tend to acquire or divest establishments more often, might need to be profiled more frequently than organisations with a stable structure and only a single activity.

There are two broad strategies the business register can adopt in updating business profiles:

- a routine approach, where business profiles are revisited and updated, say, every year or every second year; or
- a trigger approach, where business profiles are updated in response to certain triggers that indicate a real-world change might have occurred.

9.4.1 Triggers

Triggers are events that indicate to the business register that a particular business has changed its structure.

Some examples of triggers include:

- survey feedback advising the business register of changes to a business structure;
- daily newspapers and media articles that suggest a business merger, acquisition, divestment, or other significant change;
- unexpected changes in administrative data (e.g. if an administrative data source indicates that, say, the employment or income of a business has doubled, this could be a trigger to re-profile the business);
- major legislative changes (for example, deregulation of an industry, or the nationalisation/privatisation of a large business);
- observed real-world changes (e.g. the nearby construction of a large new resort might suggest a new establishment needs to be added to the structure of one of the large hotel groups).

Figure 10: Comparing the routine approach and the trigger approach

	Routine strategy	Trigger strategy
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Profiling strategy is reasonably simple to design. ▪ Profiling is simple to manage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has the potential to be more efficient, as the business register only visits and re-profiles businesses that are thought to have changed. ▪ Has the potential to be more responsive to real-world changes.
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Has the potential to be less efficient, as the business register will sometimes visit and re-profile businesses that have not changed. ▪ Has the potential to create unnecessary provider burden, for the same reason. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relies on constant scanning of the business environment. ▪ There is potential for changes to be missed (e.g. if a structural change is not identified through survey feedback and is not reported in the media).

It is possible to design a profiling strategy that uses a combination of routine and trigger approaches. For example, the business register might decide to re-profile the largest five or ten conglomerate businesses every year, irrespective of whether they are thought to have changed, and use a trigger approach for the smaller businesses.

9.5 Profile reports

The known structures of complex multi-establishment businesses can be documented in a profile report, which is useful for survey areas in validating the data they receive from businesses. Each time a business is re-profiled, a new profile report can be created and, by retaining the old profile reports as well, the business register will build up a history of the business structures for the complex businesses in their economy.

9.6 Other benefits of business profiling

9.6.1 Long-term relationships between the NSO and business providers

Regular contact with businesses helps to build professional working relationships between the NSO and key business providers. This has the potential to improve the timeliness and quality of the reported data, as there is more open discussion on what the NSO expects of the business. It also gives the NSO the opportunity to meet with businesses to explain and demonstrate the benefits of contributing to official national statistics.

9.6.2 Structuring businesses to reduce the statistical reporting burden

Profiling is an opportunity for the NSO to look at the reporting requirements of a business across the range of statistical collections it contributes to, and ensure that they are aware of the full extent of the reporting that is required of each business. It also allows the NSO to ensure that the statistical reporting structure of the business suits the way the business keeps its management accounts.

For example, consider a large business that operates many establishments across the country, where certain data are aggregated only at the central head office but other data are held by the establishments. Through profiling, we can discuss this reporting structure with the business provider and agree to collect, say, financial data directly from head office on behalf of all the establishments, and production data directly from the establishments themselves.

The compliance burden can be significant for large businesses, and when the NSO works with businesses to streamline reporting arrangements and make compliance as efficient as possible, there are likely to be improvements in data quality.

During profiling, the business register manager can also discuss with the business any specific problems they might be having in reporting statistical data, and endeavour to resolve these. For example, large businesses sometimes have trouble meeting survey deadlines because of the amount of time it takes to close and adjust their accounts at the end of the reporting period. Negotiating an extension of the survey due dates, even by a day or two, can sometimes make it significantly easier for large businesses to report their statistical data.

10. Common frame

10.1 'The single source of truth'

A business register is a dynamic system, where changes are constantly being made to unit-level data. As a result, coherence problems can arise if survey frames are drawn from the register at different points in time, as different frames may contain different groups of businesses, or businesses whose structure or description may have changed in the register.

The production of a periodic common frame involves the regular creation of a snapshot of the business register. This periodic snapshot can be considered the 'single source of truth', and can be used to create frames according to the scoping, stratification, and logistical requirements of the

various economic collections for a particular reference period. This will ensure that all economic collections are indeed describing the same economy.

10.2 Management information, quality audits and data validations

Periodic common frames, as described above, allow the comparison of register snapshots across different points in time, which assists the business register to undertake quality measures, audits, and validations across the various time periods.

Below is an example of how the information from a quarterly snapshot can be used to produce management information that describes changes to the composition of the business register, by comparing with the previous quarter and the previous corresponding quarter.

Figure 11: Business register management information at end of quarter Xxx 20XX

ISIC	Counts of businesses			Counts of changes to:			Remarks
	Alive	Dormant	Ceased	ISIC	Institutional Sector	GIS	
A – Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing							
B – Mining & Quarrying							
C – Manufacturing							
etc...							

11. Quality assurance

User confidence in the quality of the information produced by the business register is critical for its ongoing viability. Given the amount and the complexity of data that the business register processes, the risk of quality incidents needs to be carefully managed. For a business register, the impacts of quality issues can be detected much further along the statistical cycle – for example, classification errors flow through to the common frame and survey frames, and can cause discrepancies in published estimates.

The common frame, as the principal output of the business register, needs to be quality assured in several ways.

11.1 Stock quality measures

These processes examine each snapshot in its own right, without regard to previous ones. They are an indicator of the quality of the business register at a point in time. Measures include checks for:

- blank data fields;
- invalid classification codes;
- contradictory combinations of classification codes – e.g. where a business has a private sector institutional classification and a public sector activity classification; and
- duplicates.

Figure 12 gives an example of an audit for quality of the stock of business register units.

Figure 12: Business register management information at end of quarter Xxx 20XX

Establishment number	Blank Institutional sector code	Invalid Institutional sector code	Blank industry code	Invalid industry code	Blank employment value	etc.
ESTN20130001	X					
ESTN20130022				X		
ESTN20130057		X		X		
ESTN20130541						
ESTN20131812		X				
ESTN20131991			X			
...

11.2 Flow quality measures

These processes compare each new snapshot with previous ones (say, with the previous period, or the same period last year). They can also be used to identify longer-term trends on the register, such as shifts in industry distribution. Measures include:

- counts of births and deaths of businesses on the register;
- counts of different types of statistical units;
- identification of units with large changes in stratification variables;
- identification of significant classification changes (e.g. where a unit has changed industry or sector).

Thresholds for what is considered 'significant' will vary between PICTs, according to the characteristics of their local operating environments.

Figure 13 gives an example of an audit for quality of the flow of business register changes.

Figure 13: Business register management information at end of quarter Xxx 20XX

Establishment number	Name changed	Industry division changed	Institutional sector changed	GIS code changed	Employment changed by > 20%	etc.
ESTN20130001	X					
ESTN20130022				X		
ESTN20130057		X		X		
ESTN20130541						
ESTN20131812		X				
ESTN20131991			X			
...

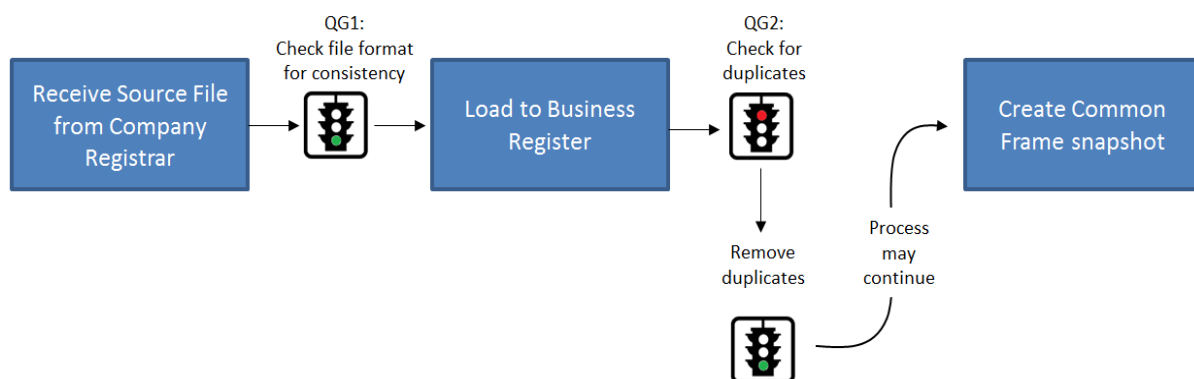
11.3 Quality gates

Quality gates consist of a set of acceptance criteria imposed at predetermined points in a production process. If the acceptance criteria at a quality gate are not met, production is stopped and will only continue once the criteria are met, or divergences are satisfactorily explained.

Quality gates improve the visibility of quality throughout the production process, and can measure and monitor quality in real time at strategic points. Documentation of quality gate operation is also a useful record of knowledge, as it describes the cause of past quality incidents, and the actions taken to correct them.

Figure 14 gives an example of how quality gates might be used in business register processes.

Figure 14: Examples of quality gates in business register processing



In the example,

- quality Gate 1 (QG1) is cleared and processing continues; and
- quality Gate 2 (QG2) is not cleared, and must be investigated and fixed before processing can continue.

12. Confidentiality

To maintain the integrity and reputation of the NSO as a trusted collector of sensitive information, it is very important that access to sensitive data is controlled, to avoid any breaches of confidentiality.

The business register, as well as its sources (such as administrative data) and outputs (such as common frame snapshots), contain data that are commercially sensitive. For this reason, access to this information should be limited to those staff who have an immediate need for it. Additionally, MOU conditions that govern the supply of administrative data often specify that data be stored and processed in a single, central location, to avoid the proliferation of sensitive data throughout the organisation.

The business register manager¹¹ is the custodian of the BUSINESS REGISTER itself, as well as any source data used to maintain the register, and any common frame data produced from the register, and is responsible for ensuring that proper access control procedures are in place.

For staff training and producing training documentation, the business register should have the capability to operate in a training environment, populated with fictitious businesses. Printing from the business register, or using direct screenshots of the register in training documentation, should be avoided.

¹¹ Refer to the note on page viii.

13. Information technology

In the development of a business register, or the redevelopment of an existing register in PICTs, the current and future capacity of information technology (IT) systems needs to be considered.

13.1 Assessment of current IT systems

- Capacity – how many records can the database store?
- Capability – can the database accommodate the statistical units model?
- Reliability
- Technical support – can this be done in-house, or does it rely on external support¹²?
- Compatibility with any administrative sources
- Compatibility with other corporate systems
- Access and security

13.2 Future needs for IT systems

- Will there be enough budget in the longer term to continue maintaining and further developing the business register database?
- Will the database continue to accommodate the register as the economy grows and becomes more complex, and as more businesses are started?

14. Review of the business register

Periodically, the concepts, procedures, and technologies underpinning the business register should be reviewed, particularly in response to:

- changes in stakeholder requirements;
- availability of new technology;
- development of new concepts and standards on a corporate or international level;
- availability of new administrative data sources; and
- changes in the availability of existing data sources.

¹² For small business register databases in PICTs, Microsoft Access has been used successfully, and can be easily maintained and supported by NSO staff. Like Excel and Word, it is a Microsoft Office tool that will not phase out but improve with newer versions.

APPENDIX A – List of common business register data items

This manual does not prescribe a standard set of data items to be included in PICT business registers, because the requirements of each country will be different. Instead, a list of common data items that are used to describe and characterise enterprises and establishments is given in Table 1 for individual PICTs to use.

Table 1: Business details of enterprises

Data item	Description
Business number (BN)	A unique code that is assigned to each business by the business register manager
Tax identification number (TIN)	The unique identifier that is used by the business when it deals with the tax department (if available)
Business legal name	The legal name under which the business is registered
Number of branches	The total number of branches that the business operates. Each branch is an establishment (refer to Table 2)
Type of legal organisation (TOLO) code	The code that describes the type of ownership –e.g. private limited company, sole proprietor (see Section 7.2)
Institutional sector code	The code that describes the economic function of the unit (see Section 7.3)
Date business registered	The date the business was first registered and licensed to operate
Imported/Exporter	Identifies businesses that are involved in international trade in goods and/or services
Overseas ownership (%)	Indicates the proportion of foreign ownership
Comments	Any other comment(s) relating to the Enterprise

Table 2: Business details of establishments

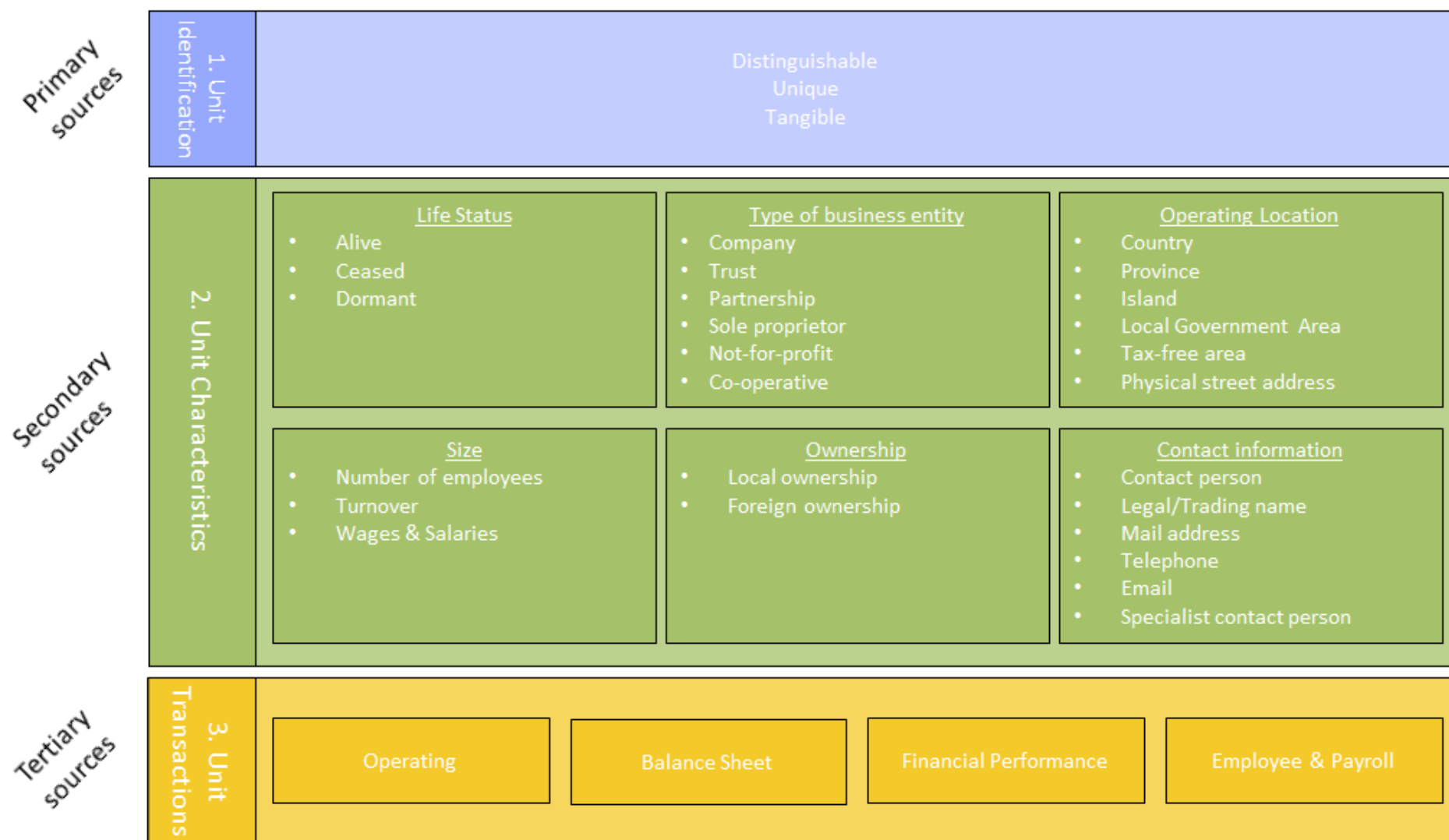
Data item	Description
Establishment number (ESTN)	A unique code that is assigned to each establishment by the business register manager.
Standard Industrial classification code	The code that describes the economic activity of the establishment. (This may use <i>ISIC</i> or a national classification that is derived from or related to <i>ISIC</i> .)
Description of economic activity	A description of the primary economic activity that the establishment is engaged in. (If a significant secondary income-earning activity exists, this should be described also).
Business trading name	The name that the business is trading under. This may be different from the legal name of the enterprise (refer to Table 1).
Date business commenced trading	The date the business commenced operations. This may be different from the date the enterprise was registered (refer to Table 1).
Date business inserted in the business register	The date the establishment was inserted in the business register
Postal address	The postal address of the establishment. This might span across multiple data fields, to allow for PO Box number, suburb, city/town, province, country, etc.
Location address	The actual physical address of the establishment. This might span across multiple data fields, to allow for street number/name, suburb, city/town, province, country, etc.
Geographic classification code	This describes the geographical code for the establishment's physical location, which will allow the business to be viewed using a mapping tool. (See Section 7.4).
Contact details	Telephone, fax, postal address, email
Operating status	Describes whether the establishment is alive, ceased or dormant
Turnover	Income generated from the primary and secondary activities of the establishment
Number of employees	May be split by working proprietors, unpaid family workers, locals and expatriates
Comments	Comments on the establishment

Additionally, for enterprises and establishments there should always be fields that show:

- the name of the person who inserted the business in the business register,
- the source of data that were used to update,
- the name of the person who last updated the record, and

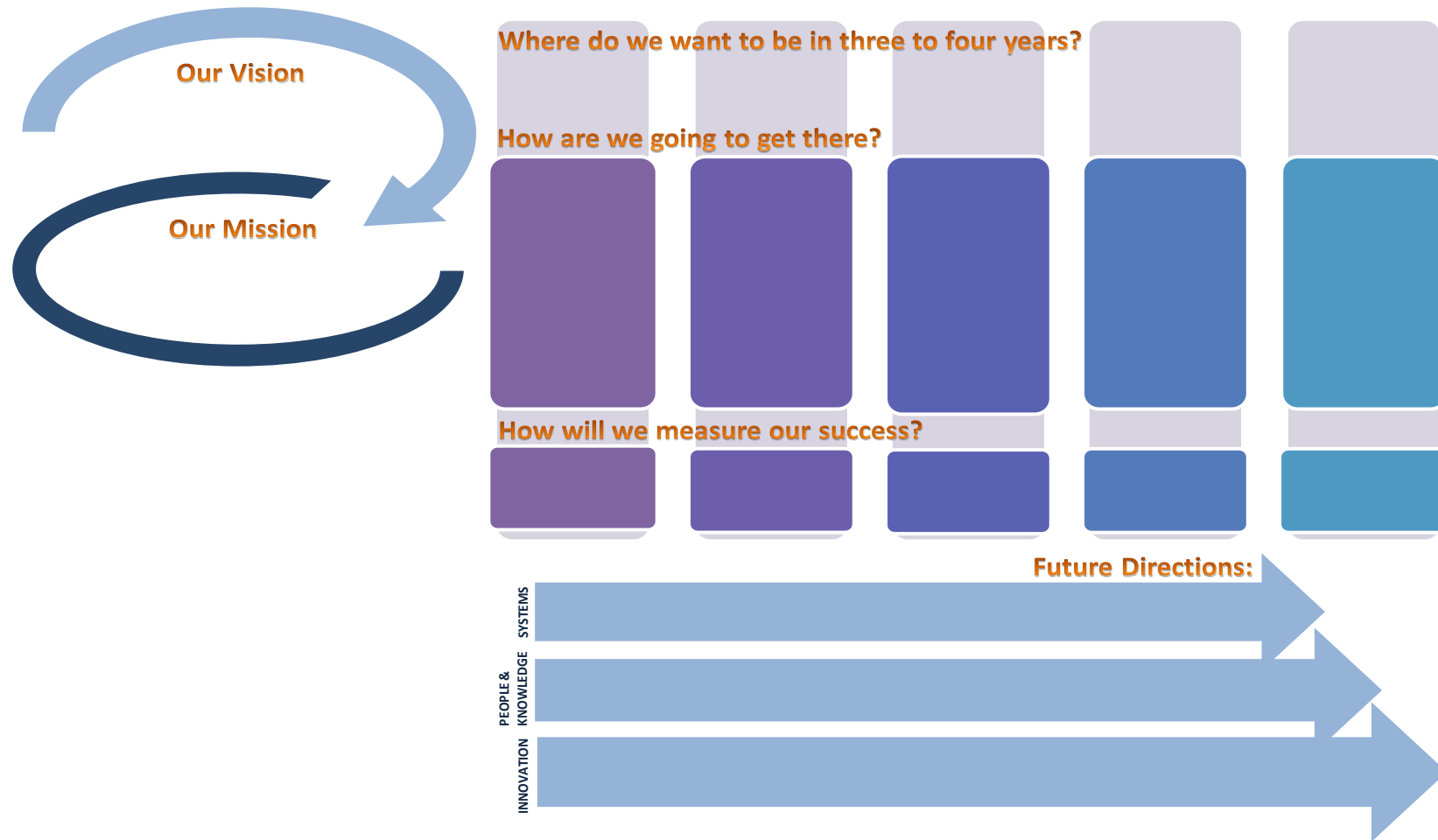
versioning, or historical values, for each data item (if the database supports this).

APPENDIX B – Conceptual model of business register sources



APPENDIX C – Template for business register vision document

BUSINESS REGISTER UNIT: Strategic Vision

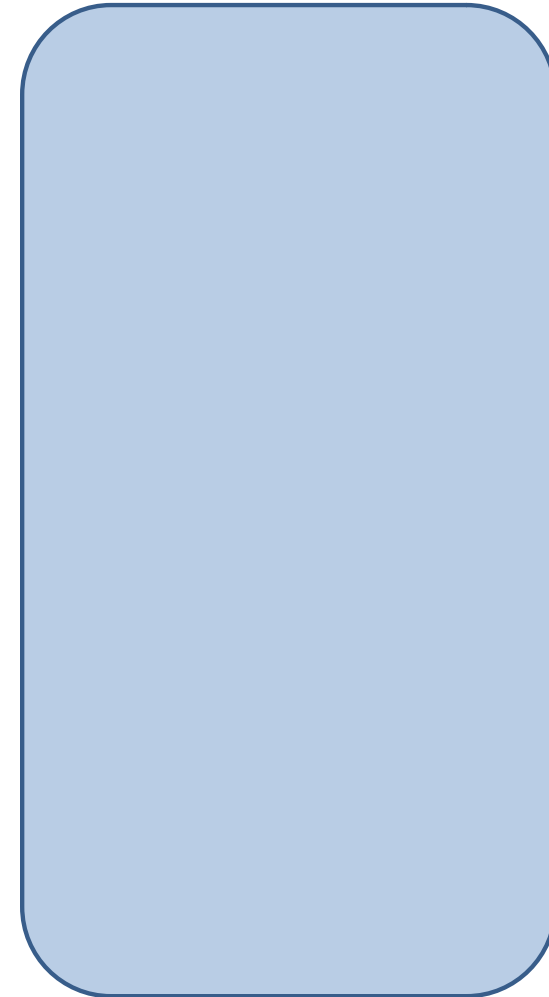


BUSINESS REGISTER UNIT: Strategic vision

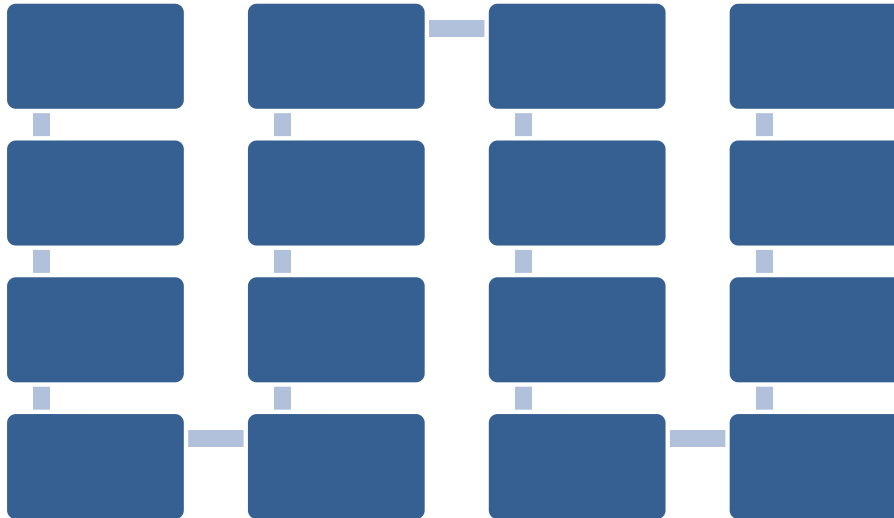
Our role and operations:



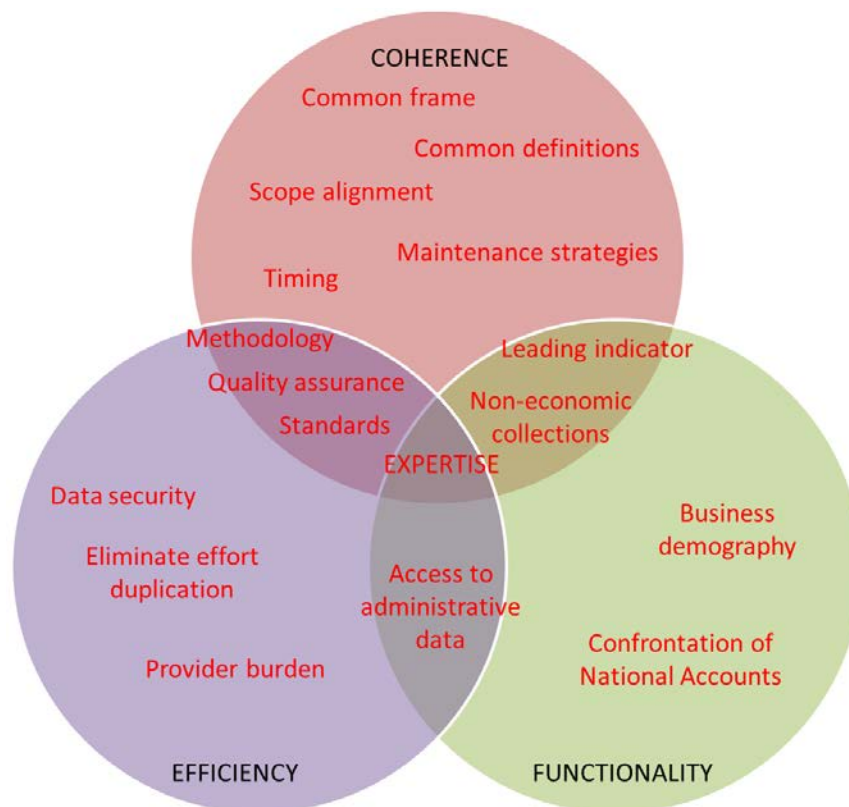
Environmental context:



Our values:



APPENDIX D – The benefits of having an integrated business register



Terminology	What it means
Access to administrative data	If separate business registers are used for each collection, negotiating access to administrative data to update frames will need to be done multiple times, through various contacts. With a single central business register, negotiations with administrative data providers (e.g. the tax department) are channelled through a central contact. Also, when all the different sources of administrative data are held in a single place, there is the potential to enrich the data by linking different sources together.
Business demography	An integrated business register can be a central source of information on business births and deaths, industry counts, and other demographic measures, for the whole economy.
Common frame	Producing a common frame from the central business register and then scoping the individual survey frames from it means that the survey cycle for every collection begins at the same 'single source of truth'.
Common definitions	Using a central business register will mean that the definitions (such as the definition of a 'business') will be the same for all collections, making their outputs more comparable.
Data security	Where sensitive business information is stored in a single central business register (rather than separate registers for each collection), it is easier to ensure its security.

Terminology	What it means
Confrontation of national accounts	The business register manager can form expectations based on changes to the register (which is forward-looking), and these expectations can be used to confront the national accounts (which are backward-looking).
Eliminate effort duplication	Maintaining a single central business register is more efficient and more economical than operating a separate register for each collection.
Expertise	Operating a single central business register allows a centre of specialised expertise to develop that has a particular focus on the identification, classification and characterisation of businesses in all parts of the economy, using a range of sources and methods.
Leading indicator	Changes and trends in the register can be used to form expectations of the future statistical outputs.
Maintenance strategies	Strategies for business register and frame maintenance will be easier to implement into a single central business register, than into several separate registers.
Methodology	Where a single central business register is used, register maintenance and frame production methodologies will be the same for all business collections.
Non-economic collections	Collections that target businesses but fall outside the area of purely economic measures (e.g. energy statistics, environmental statistics, diversity statistics) will still be sourced from the same common frame that is used for economic statistics, and so the results will be more comparable than if separate registers were used.
Provider burden	In situations where businesses providers are selected in multiple statistical collections, the provider burden can be better managed using a single central business register. The central business register also makes it easier to facilitate synchronised sampling and sample overlap control.
Quality Assurance	When quality assurance procedures are performed on a central business register and common frame, this will ensure that all business statistical collections are subject to the same level of rigour in the quality assurance of their frames.
Scope alignment	A central business register eliminates gaps and overlaps in the identification of businesses, and ensures that scopes across collections are consistent.
Standards	As economic standards are developed (such as classifications, and business profiling procedures), it is much easier to ensure they are implemented consistently when they are implemented in a single central business register. The effects of this will flow through to all business statistical collections.
Timing	When major changes happen in the economy (for example, a large government business is privatised, or a foreign business commences trading), this is reflected on the central Business Register, which ensures that the effects of the change flow through to all statistical collections in the same reference period.

APPENDIX E – Example forms and questionnaires for updating the business register

The following pages contain examples of forms and questionnaires that can be used to collect and communicate information that will be used to populate and update the business register.

The first example is a **Questionnaire on Business Operations**, which is sent to newly-registered businesses to collect information on their business structure.

The second example is a **Business Register Update Form**, which is used to communicate structural changes, identified by survey operations staff, to the business register staff, who will update the business register accordingly.

Organisation
logo

<Country> Bureau of Statistics Address
Telephone

CONFIDENTIAL

Dispatched: dd/mm/yyyy

QUESTIONNAIRE ON BUSINESS OPERATIONS

Business name and address
label

Tax identification number _____

Correct errors appearing in this label

Dear Sir/Madam,

Enclosed are two copies of the questionnaire on business operations.

COMPULSORY REQUIREMENT: Under the provisions of the **<Statistics Act>** you are required by law to fill in one copy of the questionnaire and return it to the undersigned on or before **dd/mm/yyyy**. Failure to meet this deadline could result in legal action without further notice.

PURPOSE: the main purpose of the questionnaire is to update information about your business on our business register. The business register is a **CONFIDENTIAL** computerised register of each known business legally registered or licensed to operate in **<country>**. The major use of the business register is for surveying businesses engaged in the production of goods and services in order to provide quality data needed for the compilation of national accounts, amongst other statistics. The indicators compiled denote the economic wellbeing of the country, information which is of great interest to a lot of people.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF INFORMATION: Information supplied will be used by the department for the preparation of statistics. Any release of information will be in accordance with the **<Statistics Act>** and only persons authorised will have access to individual information.

CONTACT PERSON FOR HELP AND ADVICE: XX on Ext. XX or email XX

<name>

Government Statistician

QUESTIONS:

1. Registered legal name of the business
2. Trading name of the business
3. If subsidiary of another company, please provide name of the holding company
.....

4. Type of legal organisation

Please tick appropriate box					
Sole trader	1		Partnership	2	
Private limited company	3		Public limited company	4	
Government owned trading entity	5		Society or association	6	
etc.....					

5. Postal address:
 - a) Postal address of your business
 - b) Postal address of your holding parent company.....
6. Location address (e.g. street, building, lot number, village) of your business
.....
.....
7. Proposed main business activity (e.g. sugarcane farmer, building contractor, retail grocery store)
.....
8. Number of persons employed
9. Any other information that would be useful
.....
.....
10. Name of person to contact
11. Designation Email address
12. Telephone number Fax number

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

BUSINESS REGISTER UP-DATE FORM

Submitted by: Date:

Received by: Date:

Name of establishment:

Business number (BN)

Establishment number (ESTN):

Postal address:

Location of establishment:

Type of economic activity: ISIC

Type of up-date recommended:
.....

Up-date source:

Business register use only

Type of action to be taken

.....
.....

Endorsed by officer

Type of action taken

.....
.....
.....

If new establishment:

Business number (BN)

Establishment number (ESTN)

Tax identification number (TIN)

Business register manager

Date

Notification of action taken:

HARD COPY from business register manager to

APPENDIX F – Further reading

Classifications

Classifying by:	Classification title	Published by	Link
Activity	International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), Revision 4	United Nations	http://unstats.un.org/unsd/cr/registry/isic-4.asp
	Fiji Standard Industrial Classification (FSIC) 2010	Fiji Bureau of Statistics	http://www.spc.int/prism/fiji/index.php/test-menu-item/51-publication/publication-releases/148-fbos-reports
	Australia and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) 2006	Australian Bureau of Statistics	http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1292.0
Institutional Sector	System of National Accounts (SNA) 2008 Chapter 4 – Institutional Sector Classification	United Nations	http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/doc08/sna-chapter4.pdf
	Standard Economic Sector Classification of Australia (SESCA) 2008	Australian Bureau of Statistics	http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1218.0
Geographical location	Australian Statistical Geography Standard	Australian Bureau of Statistics	http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1270.0.5.001

Other resources

System of National Accounts 2008

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/sna2008.asp>

Wiesbaden group on Business Registers

The Wiesbaden Group on Business Registers is an international expert group under the umbrella of the UN Statistical Commission engaged in further development of business registers, survey frames and associated topics. The group meets every two years.

<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/citygroup/wiesbaden.htm>