

Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific

**Ninth Management Seminar
Heads of National Statistical Offices
in Asia and the Pacific
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Developing NSO Professional Capability

Experience of the Australian Bureau of Statistics

A broad range of issues apply to the development of capability....

Building capability starts with

- recruitment and relationships which support recruitment
- ongoing education and development (training)

There are many other factors that influence capability development

- performance management
- engagement with other professionals
- challenging work
- organizational and business arrangements
- governance
- decision making processes
- culture and values

Recruitment

- graduates, general staff, field interviewers
- permanent and short term staff
- skill requirements vary from highly skilled to general clerical
- use graduate campaigns, cadetships, scholarships for highly skilled
- focus on aptitude for base level recruitment
- vacation program for university students to encourage students to look at ABS as a future employer

Recruitment

- selection criteria for most levels above base level
 - strategic thinking
 - achieves results
 - productive relationships
 - personal drive and integrity
 - communicates with influence
 - technical skills as relevant to position

Relationships which support recruitment

- 6 cadetships per year in methodology
- 12 scholarships per year in methodology (\$4,000 AUD)
 - this supports students and statistics schools in universities
- ABS funds a Professorial position at Wollongong University
- university provides in house training to ABS
- university contributes to governance boards and working groups
- ABS can influence university research programs
- ABS collaborates in applications for linkage program grants
- ABS partly funds some PhD research programs

Education and Development (training)

- extensive internal formal training provided:
 - induction
 - technology
 - leadership and management
 - some 110 course options available
 - statistical
 - personal development
- purpose is to:
 - bridge the gap between academic background and previous experience and the new skill requirements, and
 - to fill gaps in particular areas such as technology skills
- on the job training used to:
 - focus in on particular tasks, to broaden knowledge and skills, and
 - progressively introduce staff to more complex components

Performance Management

- agreement between each staff member and their supervisor:
 - role in the job
 - performance indicators
 - development priorities
 - key deliverables
 - behaviours expected
- aligns with organisation directions and priorities
- sets expectations
- focus for actions and priorities
- plans for development covering
 - formal/ on the job training
 - special projects
 - job rotation
 - opportunities for coaching

Engagement With Other Professionals

- value and risk of exposing staff to broader issues
- outpost staff to other agencies to work with researchers and policy advisors to improve understanding of uses and relevance of statistics
- active participation in conferences, seminars etc as speakers to challenge understanding and develop confidence
- contribute to professional organisations, journals etc
- work with people from other cultures, statistical systems etc through assistance programs or international organisations

Challenging work

- need to structure work so that it stretches staff to achieve incrementally higher levels of capability
- some approaches can include:
 - taking on more complex tasks
 - critically appraising existing methods of doing things
 - researching alternative approaches adopted by other organisations
 - undertaking analytical projects
- designed for staff to think about what they are doing and to drive:
 - innovation,
 - productivity
 - improved quality

Organizational and Business Arrangements

- Use organizational structure and business arrangements to help build capability
- Examples:
 - Methodological staff together to facilitate methodological discipline
 - Classifications and standards staff to provide critical mass
 - Functional specialisation to contain skill requirements and to leverage technology opportunity, eg:
 - despatch and collection
 - follow-up
 - processing/quality management
 - coding
 - estimation and imputation
 - output and analysis

Governance

- often work is cross cutting
- cross cutting governance can help:
 - decisions take into account all interests and points of view
 - consistency in treatment of events
 - robust discussion of complex issues
 - staff learn how others address similar issues

Decision Making Processes

- challenge is to empower staff to be able to make decisions and to make progress
- centralised decision making can bog down progress and disempower managers
- clarity about decision making authority is critical to both productivity and risk management
- people empowered to make decisions develop skills in critical analysis, judgement, and strategic thinking
- train staff to suggest options and to make recommendations, rather than just tell them what to do

Culture and Values

- importance of building a culture of innovation and improvement
- confidence to allocate challenging work and empower people to make decisions needs a firm values base, which for ABS involves:

Integrity - operate in a way that encourages trust

Professionalism – highest standards in all aspects of operations

Relevance – right priorities, timely delivery, quality outcomes

Service – quality advice in a timely manner

Trust of Providers – absolute integrity and confidentiality and minimise reporting burden

Access for All – equality of access, make data visible and accessible, work with the media

In summary

Key elements in building professional capability include:

- recruitment and relationships which support recruitment
- ongoing education and development (training)
- performance management
- engagement with other professionals
- challenging work
- organizational and business arrangements
- governance
- decision making processes
- culture and values