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Topic (i): Governance and management strategies

IMPLEMENTATION OF IT STRATEGY

Supporting Paper

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Statistics Norway released a new IT strategy in 2007, in accordance with a new overall strategy. The new IT strategy was presented at the MSIS meeting in Geneva in 2007.

2. This paper gives a short summary of the work in progress to follow up the new strategy. The introduction of the new strategy coincided with external focus on the need for more transparency and service orientation of the IT systems within public administrations. Furthermore, the Office of the Auditor General questioned the risk assessment of having a large number of IT systems running, to some extent with redundant functionality, to execute the statistical production. At the same time, a lot of NSI's are well underway with modernisation and reengineering of their statistical production systems. All such elements have been valuable contributions to support the need for change and development also in Statistics Norway.

3. Basically, this has resulted in two initiatives, an improvement program and the beginning of a reorganisation of the IT function.

II. PROGRAMME OF IMPROVEMENT

4. Statistics Norway decided last spring to establish a comprehensive program called FOSS for improvement and standardisation of the statistical production system (FOSS is just an abbreviation for this in Norwegian, in addition, it means 'waterfall'). The Swedish Lotta project was one of the catalysers that encouraged the decision. In addition, a number of internal development projects were already ongoing or in the pipe-line which could benefit from an overall coordination and governance.

5. The FOSS programme focuses on developments in three areas
- Development of standardised work processes, methods and IT systems
- Development of systematic quality measures and control
- Development of the organisation and competence within the office in accordance with the previous two areas.

6. The main challenge for the FOSS programme is to develop a coherent statistical system with fewer and more standardised IT systems or components. The IT system shall support the statistical production work according to an agreed statistical business process model.

7. Several NSIs have developed and use a common description of the statistics production process in their standardisation work, to improve quality and efficiency. In Europe for example ONS, Statistics Sweden and Statistics Norway use a statistical business process model originally developed by Statistics New Zealand. Eurostat has a corresponding business model for its activities.
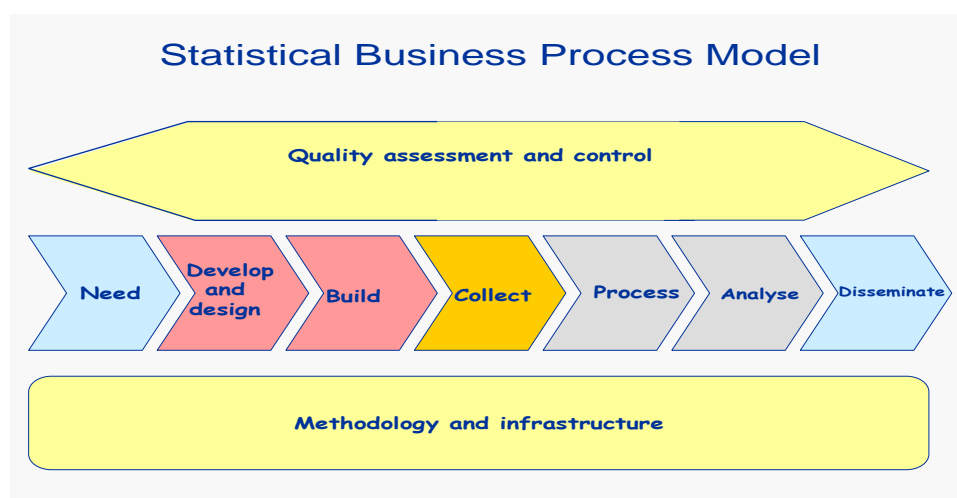

8. Methodological issues and tools may be linked to all these steps. The FOSS programme represents a major managerial responsibility to keep focus on these simplified, high-level goals while governing the developments. Equally, it is a major challenge for the IT developers to provide sufficient common functionality when challenged by the specific needs, but also ingrained practices, that can lead to just another family of heterogeneous systems. It seems to be an ultimate challenge; how can we develop a more standardised, easier to manage, lower risk statistical IT system, which at the same time adds value, functionality and flexibility for the user?

9. The total investments for the FOSS programme in 2008 will sum up to approximately 2.5 mill Euro. The programme is directly controlled by the Director General, and is built upon wide contributions from the whole office.

## III. REORGANISATION OF THE IT SERVICES

10. Statistics Norway has since the beginning of the 1990s had a decentralized organisation of the IT services, especially for systems development. Most of the statistics produced, are developed and supported by IT services in the subject matter departments. This has implied that the systems development units fulfil all tasks concerned with development and maintenance of the systems, leading to heterogeneous IT systems vulnerable to changes in both staff and technology. As a consequence, the producers of statistics want to allocate fixed IT staff resources in terms of persons or a lump sum of man-hours, in order to secure and control the resources needed for the maintenance of their statistical production system. The result is lack of flexibility to carry out major developments, difficulties when prioritizing, and eventually reduction of the possibility to really control the production systems. However, at the level of each individual system, the situation is often regarded as satisfactory by the user and owner of the system.

11.   Development of more common, framework based IT systems that support common work processes increases the need for a more predictable management, and transparency in the lifecycle processes of the IT system. Statistics Norway will now consider building an IT organisation based upon the core functions of the IT services, and implement well defined roles and responsibilities in common for the whole organisation. The main functions of the IT organisation are shown below:
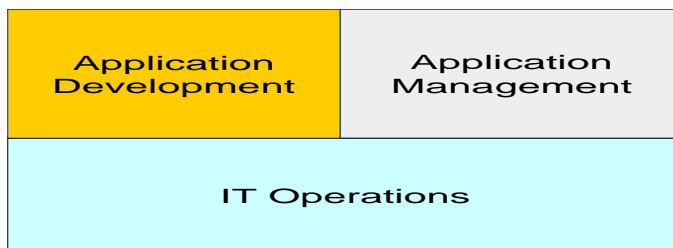
12   We will consider splitting application (or systems) development from application management, and define clear and more formal processes within each of these. Until now, only the implemented systems development method has formalised the work processes for the application development/management units. We will consider utilizing ITIL procedures also for the application management i.e. not only within IT operations (IT infrastructure) as it is at present. Furthermore, the interaction between application development and application management will be defined, also using ITIL.

13.   The governance model will be better defined and the ground rules on how to initialize and run processes will be better defined.
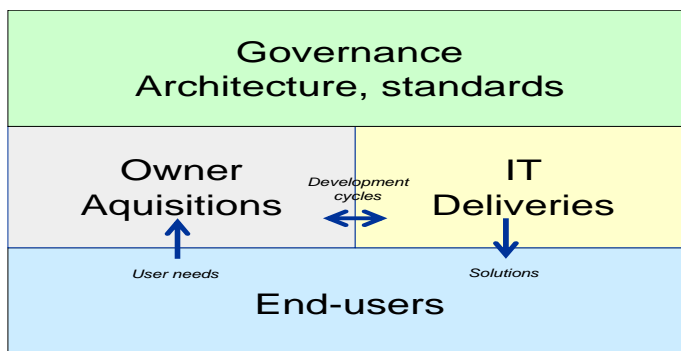
14.   The role of the owner in particular needs better definition and anchoring. Furthermore, there is a need to professionalise the IT organisation with respect to deliveries. This implies that the quality of the requests for development from the users must also be improved However, it is most important that these procedures, and the resources and competence needed to carry them out, are well defined and under close supervision from top management. The IT competence needed for defining specifications for IT development must be available for the owners of the different systems. User-need must be collected systematically, and result in release plans for new versions of the different systems. The responsibility and anchoring of the IT strategy, including requirements made from business processes, information architecture and technology is placed at the top management level.

15.   Other services within Statistics Norway can also be reflected by the reorganisation of IT. Decisions on a new organisation will be taken this autumn, and a new organisation will commence 1 January 2009. The FOSS programme and the undergoing reorganisation of IT are both important measures in order to carry out the developments described in the IT strategy, and to build an organisation that are ready to maintain them in the future.