

Stats NZ's Strategic Intentions



2019–23

Introduction

Unleashing the power of data to change lives means ensuring decision-makers have the data and information they need to make decisions. For Stats NZ, as a collector and producer of data and statistics, and as a leader of the government data system, meeting our objectives requires understanding and focusing on those decision-makers – our customers.

Data-driven decision-makers can be found right across New Zealand – they may be in central government or local councils; they may be small business owners or in international corporations; they may be not-for-profit organisations, academics, or iwi organisations; or they may be families and individuals in our communities.

Through providing data, insights, and expertise, Stats NZ plays a vital role in improving the wellbeing of New Zealand by supporting a strong economy, a healthy environment, and a flourishing society. This is why I am so passionate about Stats NZ and the work we do.

This is also why Stats NZ's overarching vision – of unleashing the power of data to change lives – has not been altered since our last Strategic Intentions was produced in 2016. However, the objectives we will pursue to get there have.

In recent years, we have learned a lot about the importance of putting customers at the centre of what we do, and working in partnership with others early and often – with proactivity, innovation, and insight. In particular, it has been brought home to us the importance of working alongside Māori and iwi, in true partnership.

Therefore, we are shifting our objectives to focus more on our customers and what is important to them. In our own work, and by working with our partners across government, we will strive to build and maintain the trust of our customers, and ensure they have accessible and relevant information to drive decision-making.

Our strategic intentions provide a high-level overview of Stats NZ, and how we will achieve our vision and objectives. It outlines how we will build an organisation that can rise to meet the challenges we will face in achieving our vision and outlines a roadmap to how we will get there through to the end of the 2023/2024 financial year.

In signing this information, I acknowledge that I am responsible for the information on strategic intentions for Stats NZ. This information has been prepared in accordance with the Public Finance Act 1989 (sections 38 and 40).



Liz MacPherson

Chief Executive and Government Statistician

This Government is focused on improving the wellbeing of New Zealanders, and creating a productive, sustainable, and inclusive nation that allows our people to thrive. As New Zealand's national statistics office, Stats NZ is uniquely positioned to support the decisions that government, businesses, NGOs, and ordinary New Zealanders make every day.

In the strategic objectives that follow, Stats NZ has reaffirmed the importance of the customer in everything they do. Trusted, credible data and statistics are essential to a well-functioning society, economy, and environment. Stats NZ will focus on their customers, to build relationships and trust, and work to ensure that impartial and trustworthy information drives decisions across New Zealand.

A trusted, credible data system is also essential for a well-functioning government. Stats NZ is continuing its focus on its data stewardship role to ensure the development and production of high-quality data across government. This is essential for accurate forecasting, innovative research, and effective delivery of government services.

As an integral part of this, Stats NZ is committed to providing data that reflects Māori communities and meets their particular needs. The elevation of this commitment provides a greater level of accountability that I am confident Stats NZ will deliver on.

Underpinning all of this is the need for a capable, stable, and effective organisation. The Government made a significant investment in Budget 2019 to return Stats NZ to a sustainable financial footing. This investment will allow the organisation to develop long-term capability to deliver these strategic objectives.

The strategic intentions within this document are ambitious but essential. I am pleased to be able to present these intentions and to support Stats NZ to achieve them.

I am satisfied that the information on strategic intentions prepared by Stats NZ is consistent with the policies and performance expectations of the Government.



James Shaw

Minister of Statistics



The value of statistics and data

Statistics fulfil a vital role by informing important decisions that support the wellbeing of the whole community.



Statistics and data are the lifeblood of decision-making; harnessing the power of data can reveal insights and create exponential benefits in many areas of life. They tell us about our population and how it is changing. They enable us to plan public services, including how many doctors to train and where to build schools. They track whether greenhouse gas emissions are increasing. They help countries evaluate how public money is spent and to what effect. They inform markets about, for example, whether economic activity is expanding or how prices are changing.²



“The world’s most valuable resource is no longer oil, but data.” – *The Economist* (2017)¹

The increased availability of data provides real opportunity through data-driven innovation. Insights obtained from exploring data can lead to new and creative approaches in business, public services, and customer experience.

Stats NZ’s strong foundations support our purpose and vision of delivering value to customers.

¹ See: <https://www.economist.com/leaders/2017/05/06/the-worlds-most-valuable-resource-is-no-longer-oil-but-data>

² Adapted from *A World that Counts: Mobilising the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development* – Report prepared at the request of the UN Secretary-General, by the Independent Expert Advisory Group on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development, November 2014.



Our purpose

These foundations underpin Stats NZ’s purpose, which is to empower decisions by adding value to New Zealand’s most important data. Our purpose emphasises that the value of data is realised when our customers are enabled to realise the potential of the data they have.



Our vision

Through our vision to unleash the power of data to change lives, we will achieve our purpose and support the New Zealand government to improve the wellbeing of New Zealanders and their families. The power of data to enhance wellbeing needs to be identified, stewarded, shared, and unleashed.



Our foundations

- Our contributions to the New Zealand government data system are according to the Government Statistician and Government Chief Data Steward **roles**.
- The operations of Stats NZ and of the New Zealand government data system are supported by enabling **legislation**.
- We have obligations and opportunities under **Te Tiriti o Waitangi** and within **Te Ao Māori**.
- We are trusted for our **privacy** and **security** of data, and for our **independence** and **integrity**, by suppliers, customers, and the New Zealand public.

How we create value

Defining value isn’t always easy but is important to inform, shape, and measure our contribution to New Zealand. To help, Stats NZ has developed a model that describes customer value through four attributes: relevant, reliable, accessible, and relationships.

- **Relevant** – meeting customers’ changing needs. The world in which we live is increasingly complex and fast-changing. The decisions that present themselves are multi-faceted, with high levels of uncertainty and risk. Customers need information that is relevant to their areas of consideration, and which draw the connections between those areas.
- **Reliable** – dependable and of good quality. Information must be trustworthy if it is to be used to make important decisions for our future. It must be consistent with information relating to the past. It must be based on best-practice methodology. It must be well-managed, timely, and efficiently produced.
- **Accessible** – available, understandable, and usable. Customers need to be made aware of what data, statistics, and services are available to them. It must be easily found and in a format that suits them. Data also needs to be accompanied by supporting information – metadata – which explains the data and provides guidance for its use.
- Providing services and products in conjunction with strong and trusting **relationships**. Products are most likely to meet the needs of customers when those same customers have been involved in the development of those products. Ongoing working relationships with stakeholders ensures commonality of understanding and transparency of priorities.

Our story so far

Stats NZ's delivery of value to customers has continued to grow and evolve – maintaining continuity with the past and adjusting to changing needs.

Beginnings

Statistics have a long history in New Zealand. Statistical data has been collected here since the early 1800s, and the country's first statistical publications were produced around 1850. Annual publications of statistics began throughout the latter half of the 19th century, covering population, migration, and agriculture.

The Census and Statistics Act of 1910 officially acknowledged the important role of the Government Statistician and supported the collection of information from the private sector. In the years following, there was a new focus on the collection and production of information about the economic life of New Zealanders, about prices and the labour market for example – particularly over the time of the First World War.

The Census and Statistics Office was established as an independent department in 1936. Its role expanded in the 1940s and 1950s when an increased emphasis was placed on economic and social planning. The Office was renamed the Department of Statistics in 1956 – later to become Statistics New Zealand and, more recently, Stats NZ.

1960–1980

- There was a rapid increase in demand for statistics to inform policy-making and planning in New Zealand. Economic and business statistics were improved.
- Computing technology drove huge efficiency gains in statistical data processing, expanding our range of products.



- New statistical methodologies (eg sampling and modelling) enabled us to expand into new areas (eg household expenditure and income, population projections) which were previously too costly.
- New legislation (Statistics Act 1975) provided for better coordination of the production of all official statistics, providing for improved governance and quality assurance.

1980–2000

- Demand for social statistics increased, such as new measures of living standards, social wellbeing, how people lived their lives (eg cultural pursuits and time use), and disability.
- Computing technology allowed us to combine and manipulate datasets to tailor information to individual client requirements.
- The Māori Statistics Unit was established.



- We established a Data Laboratory in which non-aggregated data was made available to researchers.
- We added a focus on analysis and reporting of social trends and issues (eg the New Zealand Now series of reports).
- We began collecting iwi information as part of the regular census.
- Customers were now able to access statistics on Statistics New Zealand's website.

2000–2019

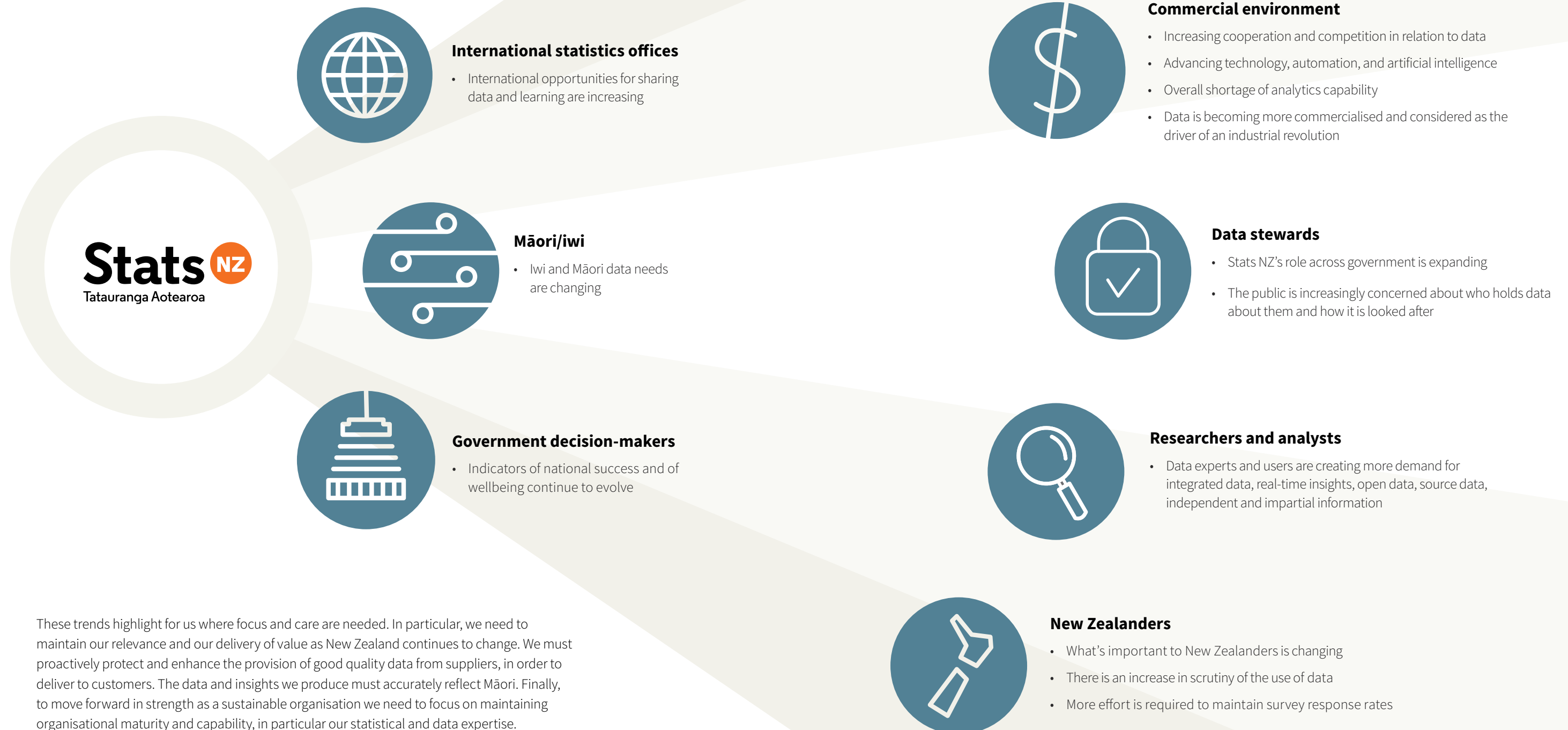
- Under the Making More Information Freely Available (MIFA) initiative, some of the data and products were made free that customers were previously charged for.
- We moved more towards 'administrative data first' in the production of official statistics, to reduce the burden on respondents and to explore new data opportunities for customers.
- We formally took up the leadership of the Official Statistics System (OSS) in New Zealand.
- New partnerships were established with other organisations, including government agencies.



- We developed and expanded the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI), a world-leading resource for researchers.
- The Government Statistician took on an additional public service role – Government Chief Data Steward with the authority to set mandatory standards and direct the adoption of common data capabilities across government.
- We put census and several business surveys online to make it easier for respondents and improve the quality of the data we produced.
- New statistics were introduced on the environment, child poverty, and wellbeing.

Our current context

In 2019, Stats NZ continues to be positioned among a large number and variety of partners, customers, and stakeholders. In addition, there are many observable trends in our wider environment that affect us in various ways.



These trends highlight for us where focus and care are needed. In particular, we need to maintain our relevance and our delivery of value as New Zealand continues to change. We must proactively protect and enhance the provision of good quality data from suppliers, in order to deliver to customers. The data and insights we produce must accurately reflect Māori. Finally, to move forward in strength as a sustainable organisation we need to focus on maintaining organisational maturity and capability, in particular our statistical and data expertise.

The 2030 view

A strategic opportunity to respond to change

The world of data analytics has begun a dramatic expansion which offers many new opportunities. By 2030 we anticipate that we will be operating in a world where:

- the use and application of data products and services will continue on an exponential growth curve, fuelled by technology developments
- efforts to commercialise data in the private sector will continue, with some crossover into the public sector – access to data may be limited as a result
- the volume and type of data captured will expand and create demand for those who can sift through and make sense of the information being produced
- new sources of data and increasing links across customer groups will allow greater insights.

The future of the government data system

Like the wider data community, the government data system will also change in the coming years. Stats NZ envisions data flowing between government agencies, where data from multiple sources is linked to create highly specialised insights.

Government will be increasingly aware of the availability of data and its ability to support and inform strategic and operational decisions, and as a result support agency goals and objectives. As agencies become more data savvy, they will develop their own internal data-science capabilities.

Collectively, the sector will be characterised as a self-service data community that is interconnected, collaborative, and shaped by key partnerships, including Treaty partners. It is through this shift in behaviour as well as the interconnected nature of data supply, increased data awareness, and network of strategic partnerships that the power and value of data will continue to be unleashed.

The impact on Stats NZ

To meet these escalating customer expectations, Stats NZ will need to focus on **customer-centricity** and **empowerment**. To remain relevant to our customers, our products and services will need to evolve to meet these changes.



Our strategic response

Our strategic direction for 2019–23 outlines four strategic objectives that have a focus on being customer-centric. The visible impacts on our communities that achieving these will create are also described. These objectives will drive the delivery of value to our customers, the ongoing shaping of Stats NZ, and the prioritisation of our work.



Strategic objective 1

Growing customer confidence through relevance and reliability

We will work with customers to test and develop fit-for-purpose products that meet their needs and inspire trust and confidence.

Continued customer trust and confidence in our products and services is essential to realising the value of our products and services. To truly empower the data system, customers need to see how data and statistical products can support their future success and the wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

To achieve this, we will source, enrich, prepare, sustain, and unleash data to meet the needs of

the customer, and promote the wider use of our most valuable asset: data.

Impact on communities

- 1.1 Customers will have a high level of confidence that our products and services consistently meet their changing needs.
- 1.2 New Zealanders will trust that our products and services accurately describe New Zealand as our country continues to change.
- 1.3 The ongoing delivery of fundamental statistics will continue to underpin a stable governance system in New Zealand.



Strategic objective 2

Expanding customer use of existing data through improved accessibility

We will enhance accessibility and make it easy for our customers to understand and use the existing data and information they need to make informed decisions.

The true value of data will be realised through use and application by an increasing number of customers and in an increasing number of circumstances.

We will strive to remove any barriers to the use of data by making it easier to find, access, understand, and use. In doing so, we will also work

to lift the capability of future data users so more people and organisations understand what is available and how it can support their efforts.

Impact on communities

- 2.1 Customers will easily find and use the data and information they need in a way that suits them.
- 2.2 Customers will fully realise the potential of the data and information available to them to benefit New Zealanders and their communities.



Strategic objective 3

Enabling sound decision-making through providing relevant, reliable, and accessible data that reflects Māori communities

We will improve the quality and availability of data and information, and support informed decisions to lift the social, economic, and cultural wellbeing of Māori.

The availability and accessibility of high-quality data enables communities to realise the potential value through better insights and decisions.

We will work with Māori communities to improve the quality of their data so that these communities are more fully represented in the data. Data improvements will enable improved planning that directly supports the wellbeing of Māori.

Impact on communities

- 3.1 Māori communities will have access to data and information that reflects their needs and characteristics.
- 3.2 Māori communities will have improved data capability to inform decisions.
- 3.3 Data and information will be improved through effective relationships and consistent engagement with Māori.



Strategic objective 4

Leading an effective government data system through partnerships and strong relationships

We will build strong relationships with key stakeholders and design and shape an effective New Zealand government data system to support the future decision needs of New Zealanders, including our Treaty partners.

The power and value of data can be unleashed through widespread use to build insights that are tailored, contextual, and meet a multitude of purposes that underpin significant social and commercial decisions.

To realise the value of data, we will build strong relationships with suppliers and consumers of data. We will foster an environment that draws upon data-sharing to promote the collective wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

Impact on communities

- 4.1 Iwi and Māori will benefit from a data system that they have confidence, trust, and participate in.
- 4.2 Data system suppliers and contributors will proactively work together to facilitate the appropriate flow of data and information across the wider data system.
- 4.3 Data suppliers and respondents can easily provide data and information to the wider data system.
- 4.4 New Zealanders will better understand how data about them is collected and used to shape New Zealand.

What we will provide our customers



Statistics

As well as being the foundation for government planning in everything from the economy to the environment, from infrastructure to education and public services, statistics can be used to provide important insights for business and non-government organisations. Social statistics provide us with a rich picture of life in New Zealand, including things like standard of living, physical and mental wellbeing, social conditions, language, crime and justice, and housing. Economic statistics are eagerly awaited by investors, economic commentators, and market economists, and once released can influence movements in financial markets. Statistics also provide us with valuable insights into our environment, including the impact of climate change, the health of our soil and waterways, and native plants, animals, and eco-systems.

Stats NZ will directly and indirectly – by supporting other government agencies – continue to provide these critical statistics to enable well-informed decision-making.



Data

We will support data suppliers in their collection and management of data, in order to improve its quality and relevance. To become fit-for-purpose for customers, data will be cleaned and edited before being made available to customers in a form which meets their needs. At times, we will direct customers to data that is available elsewhere, if it better suits their needs.

Stats NZ will continue to grow its role as custodian of trusted and credible data as a critical asset for government. With support, and through collaboration and codesign, the government data system as a whole will be increasingly empowered to produce data that delivers value.

We will also continue to build on work to identify and address data gaps to ensure that the resources supporting data across government are appropriate and sustainable in the future.



Advice

As the New Zealand government data system develops, it needs to be governed effectively to realise the value and ensure its ethical use. Stats NZ will continue to support and advise our stakeholders and partners on good practice data governance. We will also provide standards and guidelines to government agencies on the collection, management, and ethical use of data.



Insights

Stats NZ will continue to add value to data and statistics by providing accompanying information, such as the context in which they were generated, data visualisations, and some of the inferences that can be obtained. This will enable our customers to make full use of data and statistics, drawing valuable conclusions from them and understanding how those conclusions can be appropriately applied.



Expertise

One of Stats NZ's key assets is the statistical, data, and analytic expertise of its staff. Stats NZ will increasingly use this expertise to provide customers with bespoke solutions that meet their needs. Customers will also have access to coaching and collaboration in these areas. Our priority will be to grow customers' capability. In particular, through partnering with different organisations, we will strengthen the data capabilities of New Zealand communities and Pacific countries.



Data Ventures

Data Ventures allows Stats NZ to explore opportunities to utilise new datasets from other organisations and turn them into useful products. We will continue our work of anticipating future commercial data needs and exploring the available data to meet them, even with data that is difficult to obtain or requires special protection.

How we will be shaped



People

People are our greatest resource – they power our organisation to fulfil our purpose and achieve our vision. How we use, organise, and grow our people will be central to our success in a changing world. Stats NZ will need people who are passionate about data, the ethical use of data, and supporting others to make the best use possible of the data available to them. This includes people working out in the community alongside our suppliers and customers.

To maximise the potential of our people, our first priority must be the health, safety, and wellbeing of our staff. This provides a solid foundation for a strong and diverse workforce. Our second priority will be agility and resilience required to deliver value to customers in a rapidly changing environment. This will provide the flexibility to make the best use of our expertise, with genuine understanding of our customers' needs. We will also focus on developing our people to engage with and deliver to iwi and Māori.



Equipment and assets

Data is our key asset. Our work at Stats NZ begins and ends with data, so our ability to sustain a consistent supply of data from suppliers is very important. Areas of focus will include timeliness, quality, and completeness, including data about iwi and Māori.

Supporting that data is a technology environment which is digital by design. An adaptable and flexible infrastructure will allow us to securely receive, store, process, and publish data, and collaborate with data custodians and communities, while also exploring and evaluating new sources, tools, and methods.

To maintain our future data capability, and our ability to support the government data system, we will continue to invest in the appropriate tools that will support growth in the data sector. We will need to keep pace with advancing technology and to maintain IT security for data protection.

Stats NZ is home to unique intellectual property and expertise. These assets need to be curated and safe-guarded to drive future creativity and innovation, while also ensuring our continued accuracy, reliability, and trust.



Engagement

At Stats NZ, we aim to be an easy organisation to do business with. Suppliers and customers should know how to easily provide and access data. Co-designing products and services with customers, suppliers, and partners will become more common over time. We will work closely across the government data system and with iwi and Māori as suppliers, owners, and decision-makers.

This will involve developing formal partnerships that recognise the importance of our stakeholders and protect the secure flow of data. Intentional engagement will also enable us to discover new data assets, recruit new suppliers, and improve data quality at source.

Communication will be regular and proactive. We will keep suppliers, customers and stakeholders up-to-date on changes that may affect them, allowing them the opportunity to provide input.



Processes, policies, and frameworks

As our customer needs respond to a changing data environment, we will work to ensure that our processes, policies, and frameworks evolve to reflect the new context, they are consistent with one another, and integrate seamlessly to provide a continued level of reliability. In doing so, we will respect and maintain protocols for engagement with iwi and Māori, and advocate for the wellbeing of all New Zealanders. We will also continue to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of those who provide us with their data.

Our best-practice methodologies for producing statistics, and for managing data, will continue to be informed and supported by Stats NZ's expertise and our engagement with the international statistical community.

Our policies will seek to lessen the burden on survey respondents. We explore administrative data first, surveying respondents only when necessary.



Organisation

It is important that Stats NZ remains a trusted, strong, and sustainable organisation within New Zealand's evolving data environment. Our culture, structure, roles, and management practices will be designed with collaboration and customers in mind – mobilised and working together to deliver for the wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

To achieve this, we must continue to hold the trust and confidence of New Zealanders close to our heart. Our work is directed by a strong ethos of public service and integrity. As an organisation, we demonstrate this by cultivating a culture of transparency, openness, and collaboration. This allows truly effective work practices and character to thrive – inquisitiveness, daring, agility, responsiveness, and active engagement.

We will need a strong and efficient governance system, supported by prudent financial management and an operational intent of delivering value for money. Our leadership team will embody our vision and character to provide an empowering and supportive environment.

We must also be closely aligned to the needs of our customers and able to innovate in response to change. This will require an organisation that is agile and flexible, with a clear and shared understanding of our role in the government data system, and of our value proposition to customers.

Finally, with a single set of well-defined metrics, we will measure our performance from the customer perspective, and manage our strategic and operational risks.

Our 2019-23 roadmap to customer centricity

Our roadmap is a journey characterised by strengthening reliability at the outset, in order to support foundational trust and confidence, as a basis for an increasing focus on relevance over time.

Our priorities for the 2019-20 year will be to secure a strong foundation that we can build upon in future years.

This foundation will be secured by strengthening the reliability of our systems, tools, and processes so that external parties, customers, and data suppliers retain a robust level of trust and confidence in Stats NZ.

Priorities in this first year will be to:

- strengthen delivery of current products and services to stabilise and grow confidence
- improve our channels to make accessing data easier for customers
- ensure it is easy for people to participate as suppliers
- shape system rules and practices to support safe and trusted use of data
- develop our understanding and response to meet the data needs of iwi and Māori
- build trust-based relationships to promote participation of our Treaty partners.

Stats NZ's future value proposition will be our ability to be truly customer-centric. With this focus we will seek to empower and enable our customers to access and use data products, in line with their changing needs.

To support these demands, future years of the strategy will improve upon customer focus through:

- our services reflecting the needs and demands of our customers, which include Treaty partners and diverse community groups
- enhanced portfolio management of relationships across the government data system
- accessibility and navigation of products supported by product catalogues
- support of the New Zealand government data system through strong system stewardship
- open data supporting a transformation of the data system
- a modern statistical operating environment delivering internal and external efficiency benefits
- improved representation of Treaty partners in our data and products.

The government data system extends across a broad range of agencies and bodies through which services are delivered to all New Zealanders. Stats NZ seeks to positively impact our communities by supporting and enabling this system.

Our contribution to the wellbeing of New Zealanders will be through:

- helping agencies understand and use data in support of a growing economy
- proactive use of data to inform decisions that improve the wellbeing of all New Zealanders.



Our strategic framework

How the parts fit together

The Stats NZ strategic framework shows how each layer of our strategy supports and underpins the layers that sit above it.

The purpose, positioned at the top of the triangle, holds us accountable to the New Zealand public and centres us on why Stats NZ exists. The purpose is supported by our long-term vision. The vision helps to communicate what success looks like and how we contribute to New Zealand's wellbeing.

Achieving the long-term vision will be a multi-step journey. The strategic intentions for 2019–23 are the next step on this journey, described by the four strategic objectives on the third layer of the triangle.

Delivery will be achieved through our products and services on the fourth layer. Together, these upper layers of the triangle provide the external delivery focus of Stats NZ, offering a customer-centric perspective of what we do and what we will deliver in the coming years.

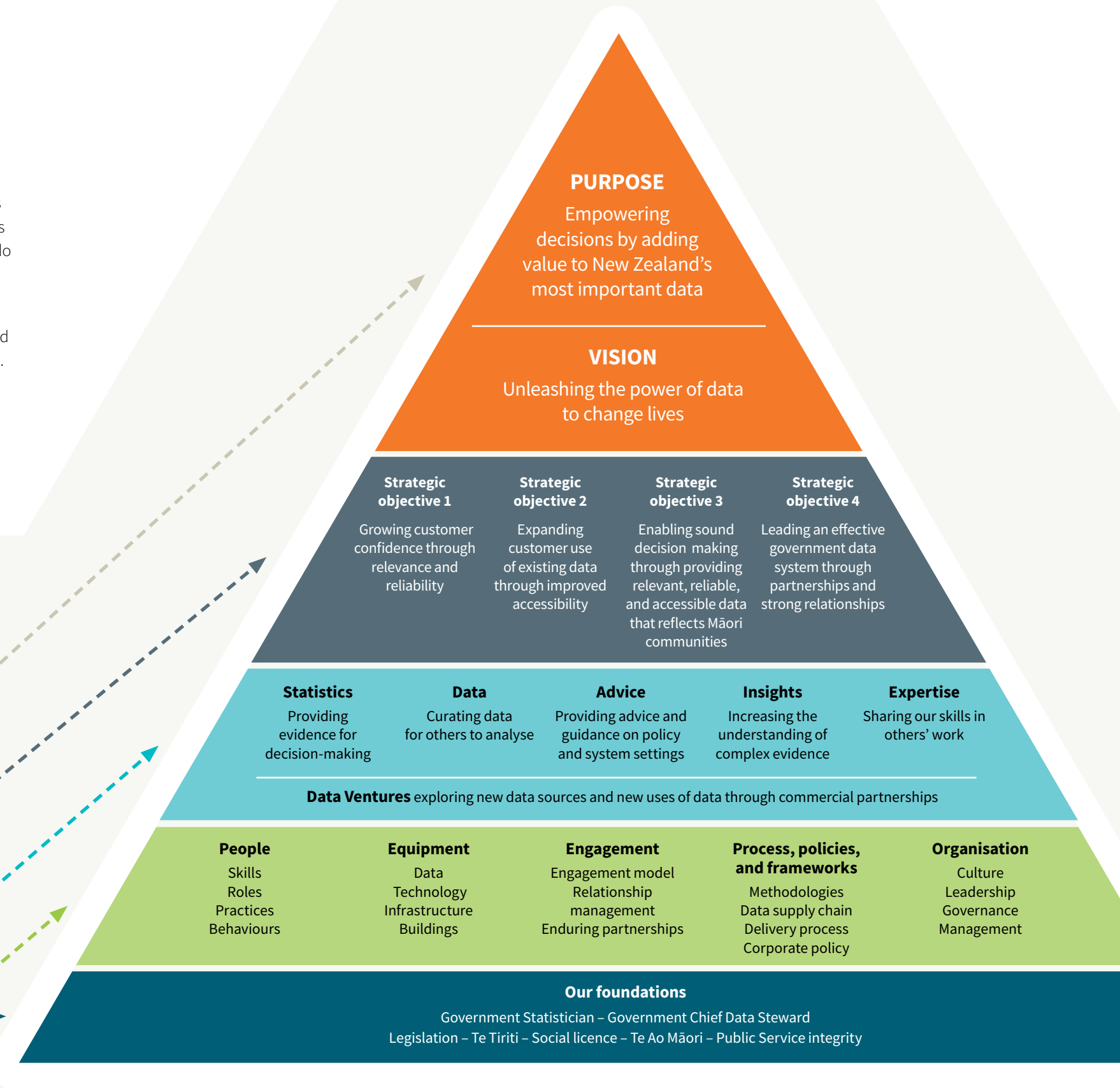
Underpinning this delivery is the organisation itself. These layers show how the organisation will describe and organise itself to support delivery of the customer layers. Stats NZ needs to be a sustainable organisation in order to ensure the continued delivery of value to our customers.

Our role for New Zealand

Our strategic direction for 2019–23

Delivering customer value through our core offerings

Building a strong and sustainable organisation



Measuring the difference we make

To track our progress, we will measure our short-, medium-, and long-term performance.

We will demonstrate our progress towards our long-term vision through our strategic objectives and accompanying impact measures. These will be defined by our value model based on achieving relevance, reliability, and accessibility for our products and services, and on building meaningful relationships.

We will track the continued provision of our products and services through the Estimates of Appropriations measures each year, covering:

- Delivery of data and statistical information services relating to business and the economy
- Delivery of data and statistical information services relating to the population, environment, household economics, social conditions, and the labour market
- Coordination of statistical and data services for government
- Leadership of the OSS
- Oversight of the IDI
- Liaison with partners and customers
- Provision of ministerial services
- Provision of statistical and data management advice
- Operation of access channels
- Delivery of the 2018 and future Census of Population and Dwellings

We will also track the health and sustainability of the organisation through organisational measures that focus on operational effectiveness and efficiency.

Having reviewed our strategy in this document, Stats NZ will, over the next 12 months, review and revise its performance framework to ensure that we have robust and relevant measure of value that can be reported in future years.

How we will report on our progress

We will report:

- annually to parliament and the people of New Zealand through our Annual Report
- quarterly to the Minister of Statistics and senior leaders on our progress against our objectives, impact statements, and our financial performance
- monthly to our senior leaders on our output indicators and the health and sustainability of the organisation and our people.



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