

Chapter 2

The Proposed Project

2.1 Title

The project will be called **Pacific Island Statistical Community E-Learning Strategy** (PISCES).

2.2 Outcomes

- Increased long-term capacity of the PICT NSOs so as to enable their governments to formulate appropriate policies based on timely and accurate information.
- Increased training efficiencies for PICTs to broaden their staff skill base and to reap time and financial savings.
- Regional cooperation between organisations to increase sharing and harmonisation of information to facilitate more comparable statistics data.
- More cohesive and cooperative regional statistics community, to develop a stronger and more effective network of communication and training.
- Sustainable methods of staff retention and mitigation of effects of staff turnover, through more efficient training of staff.

2.3 Project owner

Corporate Service Division - Judi Childs (Director of ABS Learning and Development)

2.4 Stakeholders

Stakeholders	Nature of stakeholding and key issues	Perceived level of Interest
PICT NSO staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved quality and accuracy of statistics gathering and processing 	High
International Statistics Community (Including ABS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More accurate statistics generated from PI region 	Medium
Statistics Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More accurate statistics generated from PI region 	Medium
IT staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of LMS modifications 	High
Corporate Services Division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotion of LMS related information Gathering of feedback regarding interest and needs Promotion of closer international relationships 	High
Learning and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updating and maintaining LMS Structuring and formatting of LMS courses for external use exploring the potential of the LMS to service external market more generally (eg. Aust. Govt. Asian region, etc.) 	High
Technology Services Division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing LMS training course Maintenance of web-site(s) and Virtual Community portal Ensure all relevant compliance standards are met (SCORM 1.2) Ensure the required technological infrastructure is available Conduct research into appropriate solutions and emerging technologies 	High

2.5 Scope

2.5.1 Outcomes

- Increased long-term capabilities of the PICT NSOs by providing greater access to training and other learning

resources through the provision of the LMS and Capability Framework (simplified version of the CF available to the ABS on its internal LMS).

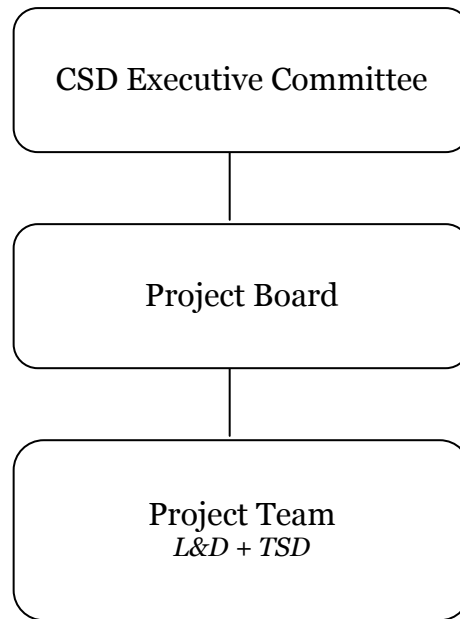
- More staff trained at lower cost or more widely available than face-to-face techniques.
- Strengthened ties between the ABS, the PICT NSOs, SPC and other organisations such as SIAP.
- Strengthened communication network and encouragement of dialogue between the NSOs on statistical training techniques.
- Alleviation of some HRM problems experienced by PICTs, including greater retention of staff, due to increased stimulation through interactive self-motivated learning and incentives such as travel to participate in further training.

2.5.2 Organisational

The project will require dissemination of information regarding the LMS to stimulate interest, gather feedback on intention of participation and most urgent needs regarding training and information resources through the LMS, which will be the ultimate responsibility of the Project Steering Committee, and will be undertaken by the Learning and Development department.

It will also require more extensive, frequent and ongoing contact with regional partners to gauge the efficacy of the project and to keep the service relevant and operational.

Organisational Structure



Project Roles:

CSD Executive Committee

- Liase with the NSOs of PICTs.
- Ultimately responsible for delivery.

Project Board (PB)

- Organise a business requirements forum in ACT or any regional training centre for all participating PICTs.
- Report to CSD Executive Committee.
- Ensure that the Committee is represented from all relevant areas of the ABS- the Corporate Services Division, TSD and the IMD.
- Address issues raised by the CSD, TSD, IMD.
- Responsible for Risk Management.

Corporate Services Division (CSD)

- Chairs on the PB
- Develop training / capability-building strategies.
- Develop training framework and the training programs, including follow-ups and evaluation criteria.

Technical Services Division (TSD)

- Implementing structure and format of LMS training courses as provided by Learning and Development, maintenance of web-site(s) and Virtual Community portal adapted to the requirements of the PICTs.
- Ensure all relevant compliance standards are met (SCORM 1.2) and that the required technological infrastructure is available.
- Conduct research into appropriate solutions and emerging technologies.
- Testing, feedback, helpdesk functions for the LMS
- Email communications channels with PICT clients.

Information Management Division (IMD)

- Web-site publications and updates for the PICT clients.

2.5.3 Outputs

- Marketing of project to PICTs.
- Information about the proposed project and the ABS's LMS possibly including prototype version of LMS and web-portal on CD-ROM to allow PICTs to view the system.
- Conversion of training packages to CD-ROM format once firm agreement secured of participation.
- Provision of LMS to external users in PICTs.
- CD-ROM packages disseminated to those with slow access to the Internet.

- Development of partnership with organisations such as SIAP.
- Train-the-trainer programs to show PICT managers (chief statisticians) how to use the LMS.
- NSS Handbook made available on line.

2.5.4 Work

- Feedback and further recommendations gathered from PICT NSO staff regarding the content and their preferred method of receiving training packages – Internet / CD-ROM.
- PICT NSO managers consulted and have significant input in the user requirements phase: relevant training packages. May require some modifications of training packages.
- Design web portal through which PICTs will access LMS and Capabilites Framework (CF), again with participation of PICT NSOs.
- Deployment of Learning Management System (LMS) online and training packages on CD-ROM to PICTs.
- Regular upgrades of OLT courses and making use of new technologies that will add further efficiencies. Use of video conferencing, Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), Virtual Private Network explored.
- Ongoing feedback gathered from PICTs to maintain relevant courses.
- Development of online communities and portals to enhance online learning.
- Approach organisations for partnership possibilities, including sharing of learning resources, such as information on forums, workshops, and seminars as well as pooling of staff resources for training and monitoring training.

2.5.5 Staffing resources

In the short-term this project will require the expenditure of considerable staff resources to design and prepare the training packages, and indeed some ongoing commitment to update training especially as new developments occur with the software and statistical procedures. Perhaps as PICTs Information Technology (IT) infrastructure develops to a point where more efficient systems may be put in place, the long-term benefits of a greater use of IT will see an overall decrease in the amount of work required of ABS staff to continue meeting its goal of enhancing the capabilities of our region.

Staff Resources

- **IT staff** – Updating and maintaining LMS. Structuring LMS for external use. Modifying software. Structuring CF for external use.
- **Learning and Development staff** – Updating and structuring courses appropriate to the Pacific Islands, based on feedback from NSOs. Communication of these changes to IT staff for implementation. Development of interactive quizzes and other assessment methods for PICTs.
- **Technical contact** – Staff member/s that are contacted by email or other avenue for LMS technical support will experience higher workload.
- **Marketing** – Brochures, website, introductory seminars.

2.6 Project rationale

Business Rationale

There is an ever-increasing need for comparable and timely statistics, as well as traditional economic and population statistics, but many NSOs in the region do not have the training to meet these needs.

UNESCO notes that a “consistent message from national statistical

offices is that the number of training courses offered should be increased significantly,” amongst its members in Asia and the Pacific (UNESCO, 2004). Australia has vested interests in the well-being of its Pacific neighbours, and this has been recognized by the ABS as reflected in its mission statements and Corporate Plan.

Online training and complementary resources such as a Capability Framework, links to regional training information (both that conducted by the ABS partners and by any other reputable agencies), and Virtual Communities offer ways of working towards such goals. It is recommended that the ABS take a leading role in this initiative to help consolidate the existing interest throughout the region that has been identified in our research. (Please see Appendix B for an example survey and responses from one PICT NSO, which supports this finding). SIAP has expressed interest in e-learning methods, and has conducted research into the viability of such an undertaking in the ESCAP region (SIAP, 2002). It might prove a valuable partner in this project.

Process Rationale

Currently the ABS provides technical assistance to other statistical agencies by providing ABS staff for undertaking statistical consultancies or conducting training courses in other countries, contributing to workshops or seminars organised by international institutions, providing documentation about the practices of the ABS, and allowing staff from other countries to visit the ABS on study tours or for training. However, the ABS’s technical assistance activities are constrained by the availability of staff to develop and undertake these activities. Other agencies such as SIAP and SPC provide some core courses, with others on an ad hoc basis when funds are available. This approach involves much travel, and little in the way of long-term skill development (for either the participants or the course providers). By providing external access to the ABS’s LMS within the PISCES

framework, many of the problems associated with the current method of technical assistance may be overcome.

Developing Internet training capabilities is a goal towards which sections of the PI Statistics community is already aiming, and though the resources are not yet consistently available to achieve this, the foundations should be developed as early as possible to cultivate a pool of skills and knowledge, both inside the ABS and as far as possible, amongst Australia's neighbours. The ABS is already aware of the benefits to its staff of OLT and the other capabilities of the LMS, however the benefits that have particular relevance to the PICTs include *tailored training* and a *broader statistical training base*.

The tailored training offered by OLT and CD-ROM learning courses will enable the ABS to provide a range of training materials that will permit PICT users to choose which courses are appropriate to their needs and they can use the material at times when it is appropriate for them (given that many have large work demands and small offices). The broader statistical training base is beneficial because many PICT NSOs may have only one Internet connection available, perhaps only used by management. OLT and CD-ROM learning courses will provide a wider base for the ABS to conduct statistical training and assistance without the limitations imposed by travel costs and staff time with face-to-face techniques. Lower costs for training, including travel, allow more staff to be trained for lower costs. The project will also be a small step towards greater regional harmonisation of data collection, analysis and dissemination, as the same training is made available to the whole region.

Systems Rationale

It is not envisaged that the ABS will have to alter or develop further its IT model for this project, in the short run (5-10 years). The technologies that will be required for most of the activities for the project—creation of CD-ROM packages, tailoring of the LMS, CF and

PICT portal – the ABS is able to perform within its current IT technical, network and operational capabilities.

The most appropriate media to achieve enhancement of the PICTs capabilities will differ according to their access to the Internet. The Islands will be categorised into 2 groups based on which method of receiving training packages they would prefer, which will likely coincide with the level of their Internet capacity. E-learning will be employed for those countries with reasonable Internet access, whereas CD-ROMs will be used for others. The latter avenue would constitute ‘stand-alone’ or ‘asynchronous’ versions of the e-learning courses provide on the PI version of the LMS. CD-ROMs might be used on laptops (where available) or on PCs not connected to the Internet, which could be plugged back into the LMS after completion of a course (or smaller module) to utilise interactive features such as quizzes. The CD-ROMs can either be mailed by the ABS, or made available online for those who wish to download the material and burn it manually. This option still may not appeal to low bandwidth users, but the simplicity may make it more attractive than contacting the ABS to order a course and waiting for it to be posted.

The Pacific Islands computer facilities seem to be developing rather rapidly through the provision of modern new equipment from donor agencies (and their own governments), so while Internet is still either slow or too expensive in many countries CD-ROM technology can be utilised as an excellent enhancer (as may PDAs in the future). It can offer high storage capacity and therefore more options to make training courses interactive and visually stimulating. They also offer the ability to conduct training outside work hours for self-motivated staff, hence alleviating constraints due to work time demands.

The NSS Handbook is a large document at around 150 pages. It is our recommendation that the ideal way to publish the NSS Handbook online is to combine both approaches and give the user the option to

view the document in either HTML or PDF format, depending on their need. By providing the user with the option, they can either select the HTML format for reading, perusing and viewing the multimedia video clips, or they can select the PDF version if they would like a printed copy or copies of the Handbook. For detailed discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the various format options for making the NSS handbook available online, see Appendix A

2.7 Constraints and assumptions

2.7.1 Constraints

- There may be a high degree of resistance to new training if it is perceived by the Pacific Islanders as an extra, unnecessary burden imposed from the outside.
- Failure to secure a partnership with SIAP or other funding facilitator would constrain the ABS in its ability to pay for bringing trainers to the ABS or another regional training centre.
- Such lack of funding would also limit the possibility of offering incentives to NSO staff for participation in training and testing.
- Slow and expensive Internet networks
- Stand alone learning will limit interactivity and assessment possibilities
- Interoffice rivalries

2.7.2 Assumptions

- All of the PI NSOs will have access to CD-ROM capabilities.
- Faster Internet connections will become available to all or most in the not too distant future (hence allowing the expansion of LMS facilities to include video conferencing etc).

- IT department can easily convert training modules to CD-ROM and can break them up into smaller modules so as to solve the problem of not being able to bookmark progress.
- That SIAP is able to muster the resources to help implement the project and make it viable.

2.8 Business impact

Given NEXUS' limited knowledge of the simultaneous work demands of the various departments, it is difficult to analyse what work may be affected or delayed by the proposed project. However, given that the changes made to the LMS are relatively small, and the commitments required in terms of engaging and training PICT NSOs (at least in terms of face-to-face training for managers in the use of LMS) are similar to what has been done before by the ABS, only on a more coordinated scale, the disruptions to the overall ABS work should be minimal. If the partnership with SIAP and SPC were to become formalized and involved, considerable time may be required at the outset to coordinate training resources, organize funding and other considerations.

If this project is embarked upon, there is the potential for either great positive or negative business outcomes in terms of the relationship between the ABS and the Pacific Islands. In laying the groundwork for greater regional cooperation and coordination, this project presents a fantastic opportunity to capitalise, not only on the technology developed thus far by the ABS, but of the emerging technologies that will enhance the statistical capabilities and therefore the development of our neighbours. If done well it could enhance the ABS' standing in the region as a valued partner.