

# **Engaging governmental entities towards a better statistical ecosystem in Abu Dhabi using the statistical maturity index**

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## *Abstract*

Statistics Centre Abu Dhabi (SCAD) is responsible for official statistics in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. SCAD provides technical supervision of statistics and statistical data ecosystems for government entities. In addition, SCAD is transitioning towards using admin sources to produce official statistics in recent years. A generic challenge in using administrative registers for statistical purposes is that the data in these sources are collected and maintained by other government entities for non-statistical purposes. This not only makes a statistics office highly dependent, it may also affect the quality of the statistical output. The key question for SCAD is the quality assurance of external entities' statistical data systems as well as their delivered admin sources.

To answer the question, SCAD has been carrying out the statistical maturity index (SMI) program. The SMI is an annual self-evaluation model that contains 44 quality measurements. It aims to measure the compliance of Abu Dhabi Government Entities in terms of applying the laws and legislation regulating statistical work, building statistical capacity and applying statistical quality standards. Within the annual SMI's comprehensive approach on the statistical system, special attention has been paid on the granularity of admin sources provided by entities. Each quarter, SCAD applies quality measures that evaluate the accuracy, timeliness and accessibility dimensions on received admin sources. The SMI is weighted average of quality scores (out of 100%) and assigned to participating entities as a key performance indicator (KPI). The SMI program provides assessment reports concluding the findings, improvement points and timeline for entities. Entities' progress towards quality improvement is closely monitored and supported by SCAD. To better educate and engage entities in the field of statistical quality, SCAD also conducts workshops to discuss relevant aspects of the project including the standards, measurements, criteria and the timeline.

The overall SMI has reached 10% increment in 2023 compared with 2022. Moreover, SCAD has received positive feedback from external entities about the usefulness of the SMI program for a better Abu Dhabi data ecosystem. In addition, the engagement with external entities also enhanced the utilization of the admin sources among SCAD production teams.

Key Words: Management, Input, Process, and Output

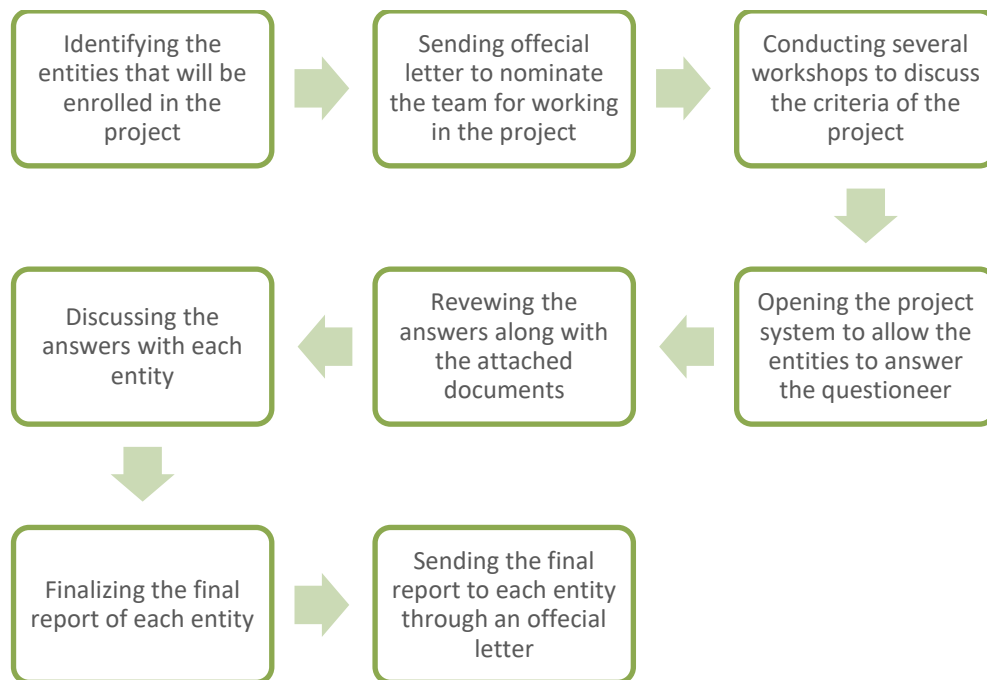
## **Introduction**

Every country or city's key development driver would be the statistics. The more reliable, accurate, and up-to-date data, the more decision-makers can make the proper decision. For that reason, the Statistics Centre Abu Dhabi initiated the first round of the project way back in 2017. The project consists of an extensive questionnaire that will include several questions that will express how the entities in the emirate of Abu Dhabi are scientifically contributing to the ecosystem. The goal of the project and its concept lies under two main categories:

1. Ensuring the entities' compliance with legislation, basic laws, and agreements regulating statistical work in the emirate.
2. Ensuring that all government agencies providing data adhere to the approved statistical maturity standards and procedures to provide high-quality statistical outputs.

All the project quality criteria depend on the 5 elements of the quality concept, namely Accuracy, Relevance, Timeliness and punctuality, Accessibility and clarity, Comparability and coherence.

Figure 1: Project General Steps



### The project questionnaire

Each one of the four parts mentioned consists of several questions that the entity has to answer in order to get a certain degree. For building the questionnaire, the Statistics Centre Abu Dhabi used several international standards in this regard as follows:

1. NQAF (National Quality Assurance Framework).
2. Quality Assurance Framework of the European Statistical System.
3. European Statistical System handbook for quality and metadata reports.

The project Questionnaire was built in several aspects as follows. The total degree is out of 100%:

1. Institutional arrangements (30%).
2. Input (28%)
3. Operational (14%)
4. Output (28%)

Accordingly, a comprehensive system is built in-house to accommodate both internal and external parts. The internal part is sent to the entities participating in the project which will allow them to answer all the related questions and attach the required documentation. On the other hand, there is the internal system (dashboard) which will allow the Statistics Centre team member to validate the answer submitted in the system. To reduce the burden on the entities participating in the project, the questions were divided into the following:

1. A section that is answered by the Abu Dhabi Statistics Center work team based on the strategic partnership between the two parties and to reduce the burden on the entities to better devote themselves to answering questions that fall within the scope of their work.
2. As for the other part of the questions, the work team in the participating entities will undertake the process of answering those questions, in addition to attaching the justification required for proving that they have carried out this work.

A meeting is then held with each entity and the answers obtained are discussed. This meeting results in a set of improvement points that the entities must propose an action plan to close (starting date, and end date), and they are also followed by the work team at the Statistics Center Abu Dhabi.

### **The level of compliance**

The level of compliance with statistical legislation and quality standards is identified as follows:

1. Low Compliance Level: Some procedures of the statistical maturity standards are in place (application rate below 60%).
2. Average Compliance Level: Most of the procedures of the statistical maturity standards are in place (application rate 60% - 89%).
3. High Compliance Level: All procedures of the statistical maturity standards are in place (application rate of 90% and higher).

### **The evaluation journey**

After completing the evaluation process and sending the final report to all participating entities, the following is done:

1. The final report is discussed with all entities, especially the weak points in their performance.
2. Another system will be opened through which the entities can set a timetable through which they will specify the start and end dates for closing the weak point, along with providing the document proving this.
3. Cooperation takes place between the Statistics Center Abu Dhabi and all participating entities to close the weak points mentioned in the final report.
4. The entity's approach to closing weak points will enable the entity to optimally prepare for the evaluation process in the new cycle.

### **Conclusion**

Through what we witnessed in the statistical maturity project and its passage through previous cycles, and the continuous development of standards on a regular basis, it had a direct and vital result in developing statistical work in the emirate from 2017 until now. The standards and their continuous development process have contributed to improving the performance of many entities participating in the project by following the work plan that is being completed in cooperation with the Statistics Center Abu Dhabi. Specifically, many entities are coordinating with the Statistics Center Abu Dhabi on an ongoing basis to develop their statistical work in line with the project's standards.

As a result of the cooperation we witnessed from the entities to complete the project, some entities have adopted an innovative initiative in their field of work by applying the project standards to their departments and sections, so that the success of the project coincides with the success of the entities in applying the project standards on a larger scale. It is worth noting in this area that the project, in its first session, achieved 60% of the general index of the project, and today the project has achieved 81% of the index, which indicates the development of work on the project over the years and the increase in the percentage of the index.

As a result of all of the above, and for the purposes of continuous development for the coming years, the Statistics Center Abu Dhabi aims to continue the project and develop all its aspects to keep pace with all aspects of development in the country in general and in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in particular and to always stand better in developing statistical work in the emirate in general.