



BUSINESS INNOVATIONS GROUP | BIG

Advancing Common Business Operations

UPDATE 1 *21 September 2018*



This email update is sent from the [Business Innovations Group](#) (BIG) Project Team lead to the [member entities](#)ⁱ designated representatives to BIG, in order to provide a quick overview of progress by the BIG Project Team, established in July 2018.

The Project Team is currently onboarding key staff, preparing budgets and work plans, and a fuller update will be forthcoming soon. In the meantime, herewith is an update on the initial step and their direction.

Project Team Goals

The Project Team is tasked with preparing a strategy for the BIG to meet the Secretary-General's five business operations reform targets, supported by additional analysis considerations:

1. *"...establish common back offices for all UN Country Teams (UNCTs) by 2022... with location-dependent services consolidated at country level..."*
2. *...an improved Business Operations Strategy (BOS) by 2021.*
3. *...progress on mutual recognition of policies and procedures... all entities to accelerate efforts to meet the 2016 QCPR mandate to operate the principle of mutual recognition...*
4. *...seek to raise the share of UN common premises to 50% by 2021...*
5. *...the business operations culture must change....to measure client satisfaction on all back-office services...."*
...do so, by considering the following....
6. *"...proceed by launching pilots to test these approaches...in an opt-in/opt-out model... supported by a full-time inter-agency team.... This will require all UN entities to conduct a high-level review of the business operations services they could offer to - or purchase from - other entities...."*
7. *"...redesign of Headquarters structures may be required...including possible consolidation of location-independent business operations into 6–7 networks of shared service centres...managed by larger entities..."*

These targets have been furthered by General Assembly Resolution 72/279ⁱ which also requires an analysis of efficiency savings, and their measurement.

Scope, Composition & Principles of the Project Team

The BIG Project Team is responsible for the design and pilot phase of these reform targets. The Project Team is *not* responsible for the implementation phase, but it will produce an implementation plan. The team will be looking at Business Operations, which by the UNSDG definition is understood to include Procurement, Finance, Human Resources, Logistics, ICT, and Facility Management Services.

The team is currently composed of three seconded staff from UNSDG entities (with two more starting in a few weeks) and additional staff will either be provided through secondments or funding of full-time human resources. DOCO also continues to support the team directly and the governance of the team is by the entities providing direct support. To date, four larger entities (UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, and WFP) have each committed 2 x full-time staff for the project team, while UNFPA is representing other entities (currently UNESCO and UN Women) which are collectively cost-sharing resources for the team. The smaller entities will ensure that the Non-Resident Agencies and the client perspectives are included in the designs.

The Project Team is led by Robert (Bob) Turner and is situated in Rome, with some members in other European locations. The BIG team is building on the work already undertaken by several groups including the BIG Task Teams on Country Typology, Business Operations Strategy, Mutual Recognition and Common Premises. Going forward, it is clear that the team will need to build on ongoing work in the UNSDG, HLCM and country level and individual entities' initiatives.

A noteworthy principle for the BIG is 'Opt-in'; it is acknowledged that trying to drive reform through consensus and mandatory implementation is particularly challenging. To mitigate this challenge, the work will initially be guided by those entities that are ready to lead and invest in the reform solutions. However, all solutions will be designed with the entire UNSDG system in mind, and all are welcome to opt-in as and when they are comfortable doing so.

Desired End-State

The Secretary-General has highlighted a future in which location independent services are provided from a network of global service centres, and location dependent services from one common back office for operational support at the country level. Mutual recognition of policies and procedures and a customer-oriented culture are prerequisites to those objectives. Common premises are a related but independent objective but consolidation into fewer physical locations is a priority, where it makes operational and business sense.



Project Team Deliverables

Concretely, the Project Team intends to deliver on the following:

- Consolidated common back office concept, piloted and proven (including recommendations for governance);
- An improved, lightened BOS to be rolled out corporately;
- Macro-level Mutual Recognition agreement;
- Corporate approach to common premises based on solid data and business case;
- Common method to determine UNSDG business operations baseline costs;
- Common list/method of metrics and KPIs to determine UNSDG business operations efficiency savings and service quality;
- Map of current client satisfaction measurement schemes in the UNSDG;
- Initiate inventory of UNSDG business innovations to enable inter-entity learning and experience sharing on best practices;
- Initiate an inter-agency service catalogue;
- Recommendations on contractual obligations for service providers and recipients to ensure mutual accountability.



ⁱ [Resolution 72/279](#), *Repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system*:

- (OP 6) "Welcomes measures by the Secretary-General to advance common business operations, where appropriate, including common back-offices, and with the target of 50 per cent common premises by 2021, to enable joint work and generate greater efficiencies, synergies and coherence, and requests the implementation of those measures in accordance with resolution 71/243";
- (OP 28) "...recognizes that that commitment to reform is an essential component of a funding compact, and therefore requests the UN development system, as the starting point for its commitment to the funding compact.... (g) To achieve efficiency gains as envisioned by the Secretary-General in his report; (h) To achieve common results at the country level;"