



BUSINESS INNOVATIONS GROUP | BIG

Advancing Common Business Operations

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The *Business Innovations Strategic Results Group (BIG)*ⁱ of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group is tasked with delivering and building on the *Secretary-General's UN Reform targets*ⁱⁱ and proposals, that seek to maximize programmatic gains through *efficient and high-quality back-office operations*.

This BIG Update 9 is provided to keep *UN staff and leadership* informed of the progress and next steps towards jointly delivering the envisioned benefits of co-location and common operations in UN country teams (UNCTs). – Previous Updates and background are now available [online](#)ⁱⁱⁱ.

Latest highlights:

- The *BIG^{iv} project team^v* has delivered four foundational workstreams for global rollout.
- In November 2019, the BIG member entities endorsed further development of the *Common Back Office* as well as transformative *Fleet Services* concepts, providing clarity for the remaining project deliverables.

Status of the BIG Project by workstream





Mutual Recognition

Operate with the [mutual recognition](#)¹ of entities' policies and procedures to readily enable inter-agency service provision

With the addition of UNEP, *17 UN entities*² are now committed to applying the principle of Mutual Recognition, i.e. using other UN entities' applicable approaches – such as relating to the hiring of staff or use of an existing contract – to reduce transaction cost, improve economies of scale, speed up the delivery of services, and thus benefit programmatic outcomes.

Various efforts are under way to operationalize the Mutual Recognition, including, among others, *workshops for business support management and leadership*. These have been held at WFP, UNHCR and UNICEF, and others are being planned. Guidance for implementing Mutual Recognition and additional communication materials have been posted on the [HLCM website](#).



Client Satisfaction Principles

Improve the quality of inter-entity services

The Client Satisfaction Principles, another key enabler of inter-agency service provision, have been developed and finalized; the BIG co-chairs UNHCR and WFP have signed, and the process of obtaining other entities' executive-level signatures is being coordinated by the Development Coordination Office (DCO).



Costing and Pricing Principles

Agree pricing principles to ensure transparency in service provision

The Costing and Pricing Principles, enabling the exchange of services in a fluid, fair and transparent manner, have been developed and signed by the BIG co-chairs, and further entity-specific discussions are ongoing to ensure broadest relevance of, commitment to and application of these principles.

¹ Key information and guidance on **Mutual Recognition** are available at: <https://www.unsystem.org/content/mutual-recognition>

² To date, the **17 signatories** of the Mutual Recognition Statement include: the UN Secretariat, as well as FAO, ILO, IOM, ITU, UN Women, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNRWA, WFP, and WHO.



Business Operations Strategy (BOS)

Adopt improved Business Operations Strategy by all UN country teams by 2021

The revised and streamlined **BOS 2.0** was launched in October 2019 and handed over to DCO for rollout across all UNCTs. The *BOS Guidance* has been circulated to Resident Coordinators' Offices (RCOs) and is available [online](#)³.

The BOS 2.0 was met with great enthusiasm by country offices; for instance, the first BOS 2.0 webinar, hosted by DCO, was remarkably well attended, with over 500 lines dialling in from across the world.

The rollout will be further supported by the accompanying *BOS online platform*, which is now in its final stage of development. Additionally, a *series of regional workshops and Trainings of Trainers (ToT)* to develop global capacity were held in **Istanbul** and **Amman** in November, with new ones planned for **Bangkok, Panama, Addis Ababa, and Dakar** in 2020.



Common Back Offices (CBO)

Establish common back offices for all UN country teams by 2022

This highly complex workstream aimed at developing and testing approaches to consolidating country-level business support operations will be the major focus of the BIG's work going forward.

The designing and piloting phases are expected to take place during the first half of 2020, with global rollout, led by DCO, planned to take place thereafter.



NEW! Fleet Services concept

Explore a unified light vehicle fleet to improve cost, utilization, safety and emissions outcomes

The BIG entities endorsed the *fleet services concept* as a means of collaboratively achieving significant efficiency gains through the pooling and common management of light vehicle fleets, with a focus on the safe and effective movement of staff to support programmes.

The fleet services concept has implications at both location-dependent (in-country) and location-independent (out of country) levels, thus bridging the *common back office* and *global shared services* workstreams.

³ **BOS 2.0 guidance** is available at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/business-operations-strategy-bos-20-guidance>

The envisioned benefits of the fleet services concept include:

- **reduced cost** through vehicle optimization (right sizing and right profiling), improved tasking methods, and enhanced cost-control measures;
- **improved safety & security** for transport users through geo-spatial tracking, training and monitoring;
- **improved access to transportation** for UN staff through ride hailing; and
- **reduced emissions** footprint for fleet operations.

The next phase of the concept, to be delivered in Q2 2020, will provide detailed proposals on how the concept would be governed, the financial model, technology solutions and a change management plan.



Global Shared Service Centre (GSSC)

Explore consolidation of location-independent business operations into a network of shared service centres

Results of the *Marketplace Survey*, conducted in Q3 2019 and aimed at assessing the level of interest and potential market size for the inter-agency exchange of business support services, have been reviewed, and customized reports have been shared with the 21 UN entities that responded.

Following further inter-agency discussions on the results, it was agreed that the BIG inter-agency Project Team will issue in Q4 2019 a follow-up questionnaire to focus on and gauge, in particular, the geographical scope of location-independent services and the scale of offerings.



Common Premises

Increase the proportion of UN common premises to 50 per cent by 2021

The Common Premises workstream has completed its pilots, aimed at testing consolidation approaches within a country type, in **Bolivia, Kosovo, Sri Lanka** and **Burundi**. The final two pilots, **Colombia** and **Pakistan**, are planned for December 2019 and January 2020 respectively.

Meanwhile, the new consolidation *tool* is expected to be finalized in December 2019, and the workstream is expected to be handed over to DCO and the Task Team on Common Premises and Facilities Management (TTCP+FS) for global rollout in March 2020.

ⁱ Learn the member entities and other information on the **Business Innovations Strategic Results Group** (BIG) of the *United Nations Sustainable Development Group*, currently co-chaired by UNHCR and WFP, at: <https://unsdg.un.org/about/who-we-are>

ⁱⁱ The United Nations **Secretary-General's December 2017 Report** can be found at: <https://undocs.org/A/72/684>

ⁱⁱⁱ **BIG Updates** can be found at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources>

^{iv} Read more of the **scope of the BIG** at: <https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/business-operations>

^v More of the **scope of the project team** at: <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/business-innovations-group-factsheet>