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Workforce data quality



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Preface

This Standard was prepared by the Standards Australia Committee MB-009, Human Resources and Employment.

The objective of this document is to specify a basis for organisational improvement in the quality of workforce data available for analysis and, decision-making. It applies equally to organizations in both the private and public sector.

This document applies to all types of business large and small, not-for-profit and commercial operations. It is applicable across all industry sectors.

This document provides validity and consistency to comparative data whether it be by industry, function, region or size specific segmentation.

Australian Standards are voluntary. They do not include contractual, legal or statutory requirements. Voluntary standards do not replace laws, which take precedence.

The term “informative” is used in Standards to define the application of the appendix to which it applies. An “informative” appendix is only for information and guidance.

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Australian Standard®

Workforce data quality

Section 1 Scope and general

1.1 Scope

This document specifies a basis for organisational improvement in the quality of workforce data available for analysis and, decision-making.

Workforce data quality, for the purpose of this document, is the process of —

- (a) workforce data determination;
- (b) data capture;
- (c) data maintenance; and
- (d) data review processes.

This document does not cover the analysis of data and reporting structure or the definition of any metric other than quality of human resources (HR) data.

1.2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

NOTE Documents referenced for informative purposes are listed in the Bibliography.

1.3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

1.3.1

accuracy

the degree to which data reflects the parameters being measured including consideration for the purpose and use of data

1.3.2

completeness

relevant data recorded at level of granularity required

1.3.3

consistency

capture of data over length of time in the same format, coding and naming conventions and used in the same way

1.3.4

data

reinterpretable representation of information in a formalized manner suitable for communication, interpretation, or processing

[SOURCE: ISO 10303-1:1994, 3.2.15]

1.3.5

data set

logically meaningful grouping of data

Note 1 to entry: An example of a data set is electronic data interchange (EDI).

1.3.6**data quality**

degree to which a set of inherent characteristics of data fulfils requirements

1.3.7**data quality management**

coordinated activities to direct and control an organization with regard to data quality

1.3.8**information**

knowledge concerning objects, such as facts, events, things, processes, or ideas, including concepts, that within a certain context has a particular meaning

1.3.9**may**

indicates the existence of an option

1.3.10**measure**

ascertain or determine the magnitude or quantity of something

1.3.11**measurement**

result of measuring something

1.3.12**objective evidence**

data supporting the existence or verity of something

Note 1 to entry: This can be determined through observing, measuring, testing or other means.

1.3.13**process**

set of interrelated or interacting activities that use inputs to deliver an intended result

1.3.14**quality**

degree to which a set of inherent characteristics of an object fulfils requirements

Note 1 to entry: The term “quality” can also be used with adjectives such as poor, good or excellent.

Note 2 to entry: “Inherent”, as opposed to “assigned”, means existing in the object.

1.3.15**relevance**

ability to use data to generate meaning, insights and interpretations for specified audience

1.3.16**requirement**

need or expectation that is stated, generally implied or obligatory

1.3.17**shall**

indicates that a statement is mandatory

1.3.18**should**

indicates a recommendation

1.3.19**timeliness**

responsiveness in the availability of data, accounting for cyclical impacts

Note 1 to entry: For example, seasonal trends.

1.3.20**validation**

confirmation, through the provision of objective evidence, that the requirements for a specific intended use or application have been fulfilled

1.3.21**verification**

confirmation, through the provision of objective evidence, that specified requirements have been fulfilled

1.3.22**workforce**

anyone engaged in providing labour or service that contributes to organisational outcomes

Note 1 to entry: This includes direct employees (on payroll), agency staff, contractors, consultants and volunteers.

1.3.23**workforce data**

information represented in a formal manner relating to labour or service that contributes to organisational outcomes

1.3.24**workforce data quality**

degree to which the inherent characteristics of workforce data fulfils requirements

Note 1 to entry: "Inherent" means existing in the object.

Section 2 Defining workforce data quality

2.1 General

A high level of workforce data quality ensures the basis of decision-making is complete. When considering what data to capture, refer to relevant Australian and international human resource management standards.

NOTE 1 Refer to ISO 30414:2018 Table 2 which highlights and recommends a number of metrics for reporting internally and/or externally.

NOTE 2 See [Appendix A](#) for impacts of poor data quality.

2.2 Accuracy

To determine the level of accuracy required for various data first consider the nature of the data being captured. The accuracy of the data determined to be important and should be aligned to relevant industry guidelines. The current accuracy should also form the basis for future targeted accuracy.

2.3 Timeliness

Timeliness of data capture and the availability of the data for decision-making and reporting should be taken into account. All required recruitment activities, e.g. resume validation, reference checking, psychological assessment, should be completed prior to employment being offered and commencing.

2.4 Completeness

Completeness regularly becomes an issue when forms are partially filled in and/or data partially collected. Some examples of this include —

- (a) qualifications have not been sighted or verified;
- (b) referees have not been contacted; and/or
- (c) information has not been recorded.

The risks to the organization and the individual in these instances cannot be underestimated. Mandatory completion of all data collecting, e.g. employment forms, before proceeding to the next stage of the process, may alleviate many of these types of issues.

2.5 Consistency

Consistency in collecting data are essential for comparative analysis. Comparative analysis highlights the direction of an issue being monitored such as an increase in workforce turnover.

To be consistent, consideration should be given to —

- (a) timing of the data collecting, e.g. monthly, bi-monthly;
- (b) formula used in any calculation not varying; and
- (c) data points used not varying.

2.6 Relevance

Not all data collected is valuable. Many data points currently being measured are interesting but not significant. One way to understand the importance of data and measurement is to use a framework that allows for the grouping of data points and/or measurements. For simplicity, group the resulting metric

using the performance audit framework of input, process, output and outcome to allow the metric to be clustered across the activities within the workforce lifecycle.

NOTE This guideline for internal and external human capital reporting is in accordance with ISO 30414.

This framework focuses on a grouping within an activity. Some examples of this include —

- (a) inputs for recruitment and talent management;
- (b) grouping across activities; and
- (c) the entire workforce lifecycle.

An example of this grouping can be seen through the following recruitment process:

- (i) *Input* — Resumes received.
- (ii) *Process* — Interviews with prospective employees.
- (iii) *Output* — Hiring of an employee, contractor etc.
- (iv) *Outcome* — Impact of hire, i.e. comparing the desired outcome, e.g. sales dollars, customer service scores etc., against the actual outcome of what the new recruit delivered in the nominated timeframe.

Using the above grouping, the relevant data to use for various metric and assessments should be determined.

Section 3 Workforce lifecycle framework

3.1 Expanding the workforce lifecycle framework

Expanding the workforce lifecycle framework will enhance the ability to determine what data should be captured. Through expansion of the framework, a clearer understanding of the inter-relationships of each stage of the lifecycle will be determined, see example in [Table 3.1](#).

Table 3.1 — Example of expanded workforce lifecycle framework

Workforce lifecycle (Organisational perspective)							
Define		Manage			Align		
Requirements	Strategize and plan	Consolidate/acquire	Develop	Administer	Analyse	Recommend	Evaluate
Organisational objective(s)	Workforce strategy	Employer of choice positioning	Organization development	Reward and recognition	Workforce activity analytics	Statutory reporting	Data dictionary
Define work required to deliver objectives	Workforce planning	Alumni	Capability framework	Payroll	Root cause analytics	Administrative reporting	HR data quality
Organization design	Diversity and inclusion	Candidate attraction	Position descriptions	Statutory requirements	Workforce alignment	Workforce reporting	
Define functions and roles required	Sustainable employability	Recruitment	Critical role management	Health and safety	Change management		
Define critical functions and roles	Workforce design	Assessment	Mandatory training	Disciplinary management	Monitor		
Determine build capability, buy capability or outsource requirement		Interviewing	Performance management	Employee relations			
Values		Reference checking	Performance development	Industrial relations			
		Clearances/psychology testing	Succession planning	Policies and procedures			
				Workforce allocation			
		Letter of offer	Engagement	Voluntary			
		On boarding	Retention	Involuntary			
		Contract preparation and management	Business advisory/partnering	Outplacement			
		Vendor management		Transition to retirement			

Table 3.1 (continued)

Workforce lifecycle (Organisational perspective)								
Define		Manage			Align			Repeat
Requirements	Strategize and plan	Consolidate/ acquire	Develop	Administer	Analyse	Recommend	Evaluate	Repeat
				Retirement				
				Knowledge management				
				Governance				
				Contingent management				

3.2 Using the framework

The content in the expansion of the workforce lifecycle framework will vary across industries. Organization size will have an impact on what services are undertaken and what data needs to be captured. This framework should be used to document the activities undertaken within the organization.

NOTE Some organizations may not manage an alumnus or have a need for vendor management. Other organizations may break recruitment into several subsets due to the volume of recruits.

While each organization will determine what exactly is relevant to include in the workforce lifecycle framework the similarities across industries and size of organization will typically outweigh the differences.

3.3 Generic workforce data framework

The relevant human resource information shall be part of an assurance regime for data quality.

NOTE 1 The relevant human resource information to be collected will be determined by each organization.

NOTE 2 [Table 3.3](#) shows examples of generic data groups to capture.

The following responsibilities shall be allocated:

- (a) Setting the timeframes.
- (b) Volume of data to be sampled.
- (c) Accuracy requirements.

The key workforce data shall be user-defined.

Current and relevant Australian and/or international human resource management standards cover many of the core components of the workforce lifecycle, such as recruitment, learning and development, workforce planning. These standards highlight the most appropriate measures and data points to capture.

Table 3.3 — Example workforce data review

Workforce data points to capture throughout the lifecycle	Examples	Notes
Personal information	Name Preferred name Address Date of birth Qualifications Licences renewal dates Other mandatory information, e.g. tax file number, bank details Additional considerations: work preferences (e.g. shift work, part-time, full-time), preferred work location, other skills and qualifications	

Table 3.3 *(continued)*

Workforce data points to capture throughout the lifecycle	Examples	Notes
Position information, including critical position identification	Position title Reporting line Critical position Y/N mandatory requirements Qualifications Licences Certifications	ISO 30400
Organisational chart	Full chart of the organization reporting lines and position titles	
Learning and development records	Courses attended Development activities undertaken Certification renewals Mandatory training completion Additional considerations: hours of training, development plan	
Staff recruitment	Recruitment costs Time to fill vacant positions Number of vacant positions Quality of hire Impact of hire	
Onboarding	Time to full productivity	
HR data dictionary		
HR data analytics especially full-time equivalent (FTE) and headcount	FTE Headcount Employee total Full-time Part-time Casual labour Contractors Turnover	
HR master data set (user defined)		
HR salary data	All payroll data	
Staff performance ratings		
Staff visa information (right to work)		
Staff overtime status — Exempt		
Staff bonus payments		
Mandatory credentials	For example: License renewals Recertifications Insurance requirements Practicing certificates	
Survey data	Employee engagement, culture surveys etc.	
Occupational health and safety data	Accidents, near misses	ISO/TC 283

Section 4 Data capture and maintenance requirements

4.1 General

The specific workforce data requirements for the organization shall be determined in accordance with this section (4). The responsibility for the capture and maintenance of this data shall be determined and documented. This documentation shall include the following:

- (a) Procedures for initial entry.
- (b) On-going updating.
- (c) Maintenance of workforce data.

A schedule and procedure for reviewing and/or updating workforce data capture and maintenance documentation and procedures shall be developed. Responsibility for the reviewing and updating of workforce data shall be assigned by the relevant stakeholder.

Relevant stakeholders shall be skilled regarding respective responsibilities and associated procedures.

NOTE The responsibility for data capture and maintenance to the hierarchical structure of the organization may be aligned. For example, data capture and maintenance may be conducted by team leaders, managers and executives for direct reports including but not limited to employees and contractors.

When ownership and responsibilities for workforce data have been established, the importance of workforce data quality through the inclusion of workforce data quality performance measurement as a component of individual performance management reviews may also be reinforced.

4.2 Current and future workforce data capture and maintenance

A comprehensive template based on the defined workforce data requirements in this section (4) shall be developed. For example, small organizations may use spreadsheets. Larger organizations may use more complex technology-based solutions where appropriate.

When employees join, transition within, or exit the organization, relevant data shall be captured and/or updated through each step of the process in accordance with documented procedures. A complete data set shall be determined for each employee.

NOTE For example, the team leader, manager and/or executive would be responsible for the quality (see [Section 3](#)), of data related to direct reports.

The ongoing review of workforce data are discussed in [Section 5](#). Performance review processes, or similar one-on-one meeting strategies, may be used as the trigger for a conversation with employees regarding individual data validity.

4.3 Historic data cleansing and collation

4.3.1 General

Accurate historical data are of great value to an organization for several reasons and include the following:

- (a) Historical reporting.
- (b) Trending analysis.
- (c) Root cause analysis.
- (d) Alumni management.
- (e) Marketing and “employer of choice” positioning.

- (f) Proactive workforce management.
- (g) Support with issues resolution.
- (h) Workforce negotiation.

The reliance on, and value of, historical data are largely industry and organization specific. The specific data that offers the greatest value varies by industry and organization.

An example of variances in the value of historical data are where one organization may consider workforce data over 6 months old to be valueless as the workforce varies greatly and is transitional, whereas another organization may consider 5-year-old historical data on a workforce group to still be useful.

4.3.2 Historical workforce data management timeframes

When historical workforce data management is established, maintaining a rolling 3 to 5-year history should be used. When the initial historic workforce data cleansing is complete, the workforce data maintenance procedures highlighted in [Clause 4.2](#) should ensure the ongoing quality of the workforce data. There may be ongoing, specific requirements for further data cleansing of specific information, e.g. changes in critical positions or capabilities. Responsibility for this ongoing historical data cleansing shall be assigned by the relevant stakeholder. The associated processes and procedures shall be developed, and relevant stakeholders informed and trained.

4.3.3 Cost of historical data cleansing

The cost of initially cleansing historical data will vary and workforce data complexity. Such issues should be taken into account when determining the extent and depth of workforce data cleansing activity to be completed.

The most appropriate approach to historic data cleansing shall be based on the following criteria:

- (a) Whether the data relates to the current workforce.
- (b) Whether the data relates to current critical positions.
- (c) Current state of the workforce data quality.
- (d) Ease and estimated cost of cleansing historical workforce data versus the anticipated benefits gained.

As a minimum, historical data cleansing activity should be focused on —

- (i) current workforce; and
- (ii) historical data on current critical positions and/or critical skills and capabilities.

4.3.4 Historic workforce data project team

When the decision is made to cleanse historic workforce data, a specific project team shall be established. This project team should include relevant stakeholders. An example of the composition of members includes —

- (a) human resources;
- (b) payroll;
- (c) employee representatives;
- (d) information technology; and
- (e) reporting and executive.

NOTE Internal and/or external auditors may be included as applicable.

A project plan shall be developed by the organization for the duration of the initial historic data cleansing.

Section 5 Data integrity review process

5.1 Workforce data quality review process

There are three parts to the workforce data quality review process. These include a governance report, management assurance, and establishment of timeframes.

5.2 Governance report

A governance report on the workforce data quality review process shall be conducted at least annually, or more often, as defined by the user.

5.3 Management assurance

Management assurance is provided through routine reporting mechanisms and evidence of action-in-response outcomes. Measurement and analysis of data quality, continuous improvement and clear accountability are all necessary requirements for management assurance.

These governance and management reports shall be available for audit scrutiny, testing and verification. The availability of these reports allows auditors to provide assurance that the workforce data quality review process shall perform its intended function. Audit work shall be determined by an examination of strategy and risk issues.

NOTE Critical strategies and bigger risks should command greater audit attention.

5.4 Timeframes

Review of workforce data shall be conducted at least annually, and more frequently if further assurance of data quality is required.

For required credentials, mandatory licences, visas and similar documents, the data assurance requirement shall be more stringent. Data quality in some cases should be absolute, e.g. physician's credentials, long-haul truck driving licence, working with children check.

When data quality falls below the user-defined tolerance levels a data cleansing operation shall be conducted, and the action-in-response documented to the employee or team allocated with the responsibility for workforce data quality.

A workforce data quality review process shall be developed highlighting the minimum accepted error rate and the minimum volume of data to be sampled for each of the key data points selected. An example of this is highlighted in [Clause 4.2](#).

NOTE [Table 5.4](#) gives an example of workforce data including timeframes and volume of data to review.

All stakeholders shall be advised of the process and what input is required by them. As highlighted in [Section 5](#), the workforce data quality review process should form another core component of management responsibility.

[Table 5.4](#) expands on [Table 3.1](#) by including the following examples:

- (a) Recommended timeframes.
- (b) Volume of data to be assessed.
- (c) Nominated accuracy level of the data accessed.

Table 5.4 — Example workforce data review timeframes and sample size

Example workforce data points to capture throughout the lifecycle in accordance with Clause 3.3	Recommended timeframes for management review (assurance)	Volume of those key data points to be sampled	Recommended levels of accuracy or completeness per category
Personal information	Annually (min)	1 % to 5 % depending on initial results	96 % to 100 %
Position information, including critical position identification	Annually (min)	1 % to 5 %	95 %
Organisational chart	3 times per year (min)	5 %	95 %
Learning and development records	Annually (min)	3 % to 5 %	95 %
Staff recruitment	Annually (min)	3 % to 5 %	95 %
Onboarding	3 times per year (min)	2 %	98 %
HR data dictionary	Annually (min)	3 % to 5 %	95 %
HR data analytics, especially FTE and headcount	3 times per year (min)	5 %	98 %
HR master data set (user defined)	Annually (min)	3 % to 5 %	95 %
HR salary data	3 times per year (min)	3 %	99 % to 100 %
Staff performance ratings	Annually (min)	2 %	99 %
Staff visa information (right to work)	Time before visa end date, e.g. 2 months	Confirmation of all expiry dates	100 %
Staff overtime status - exempt	Annually (min)	2 %	100 %
Staff bonus payments	Annually (min)	2 %	100 %
Mandatory credentials	Annually (min)	2 %	100 %
Survey data	Annually (min)	2 %	95 %
Occupational health and safety data	Annually (min)	5 %	100 %

Appendix A **(informative)**

Impacts of poor data quality

A.1 General

Much has been written about the overall impact of poor data quality on businesses. Friedman and Smith in, *Measuring the Business Value of Data Quality* include the following impacts on business:

- (a) Poor data quality is a primary reason for 40 % of all business initiatives failing to achieve targeted benefits.
- (b) Data quality effects overall labour productivity by as much as a 20 %.

NOTE Refer to Haug, Zachariassen and van Liempd, for further guidelines on poor data quality. See [Bibliography](#) for further titles on data quality.

A.2 Organization of data

Workforce data are often poorly organized and there is complexity of the ownership/responsibility for this data segmented across separate business functions/units within an organization. The function of HR may be responsible for some permanent workforce data with other data sitting with finance.

Note For example, managers may manage casual or part-time employees as well as contractors. Outsourced services such as external service providers may be a finance or procurement responsibility. Volunteers and other workers may be monitored by security or reception.

A.3 Changing work styles and locations

Additionally, the location of work activity has significantly evolved to include working at the organization location, telecommuting or remote location delivery all on a local, national and global scale. Indeed, some people doing work for an organization may never be met in person.

A.4 Improving the economy, efficiency, effectiveness and workforce productivity

The collection and utilization of quality workforce data are the foundation on which the benefits of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and productivity improvements are to be delivered.

A.5 Economic benefit

This document will have significant economic impact on industry as the application of this document will enable evidence-based decision-making, work design and workforce development. Accurate and timely data supports more efficient use of resources through the more effective identification of talent and projected supply gaps. It enables informed decision-making, reduces risk and enables sustainable work and workforce development strategies at business, industry and regional level.

This document underpins the data quality requirements of other human resource standards and supports all of the benefits of the application of human resource standards.

There may be cost associated with conforming to operational changes specified in a Standard. These costs will be greatly outweighed by the benefits derived from timely, accurate data and reporting.

Improved planning and monitoring of activities will reduce the time wasted and costs associated with working in reactionary mode.

A.6 Employee benefit

Accurate information about the capacity and capability of any workforce assists in the determination of more timely and informed decisions. Accurate and timely decision-making leads to a far more stable workforce.

A.7 Social benefit

The positive social impact of stable work in Australia has far reaching benefits. Flow on benefits include better engagement and improved productivity and an improved sense of wellbeing.

Accurate workforce data assists in the development of a diverse workforce. Accurate information also allows leadership to —

- (a) confidently develop strategies and programs to engage underutilized sectors of the labour market;
- (b) plan effective strategies to source the workforce required;
- (c) manage the aging workforce; and
- (d) enhance diversity development.

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