

Implementation of the Commonwealth Arrangements

Commonwealth administrative data is a valuable public asset and is increasingly being recognised as a strategic resource to support research, discussion and decision making. The integration of Commonwealth datasets at the unit record level to create new and more comprehensive datasets has also been recognised as having the potential to greatly enhance the evidence base for research and evaluation. However, consistent governance and institutional arrangements for the integration of data are needed to protect the identity and privacy of individuals and organisations providing the data, while still maximising the value and usefulness of the data.

To create a safe and effective environment for data integration, the Portfolio Secretaries (now the Secretaries Board) endorsed a set of [High Level Principles for Data Integration Involving Commonwealth Data for Statistical and Research Purposes](#), as well as [Governance and Institutional Arrangements](#) (the Commonwealth arrangements) to support these principles.

Implementation of the Commonwealth Arrangements

Initial implementation of the Commonwealth arrangements commenced on 1 July 2014. The implementation priority in the first six months of operation is to establish the arrangements for external statistical and research projects involving Commonwealth data. External projects are defined as those projects where the [data user \(researcher\)](#) is external to the Commonwealth (e.g. from a State/Territory government agency or an academic research organisation).

Projects are in scope of the Commonwealth arrangements for data integration if they:


1. are approved and undertaken for [statistical and research](#) purposes only. Integration for

non-statistical purposes, such as delivery of services to particular individuals, compliance monitoring, incident investigation or regulatory purposes, are out of scope, as these activities have different processes and legislative requirements governing them; and

2. involve integration at the unit record level (records for a person or business), or at the micro level (e.g. information on small geographic areas); and
3. the data custodian for at least one dataset is a Commonwealth agency; and
4. the data user is external to the Commonwealth (e.g. for State/Territory government or academic research), as mentioned above.

The initial implementation of the Commonwealth arrangements will be for selected external projects. Once approved, details of the selected projects will be available on the [public register of data integration projects](#). During the initial implementation, the integrating authority for the selected projects are to be Commonwealth agencies. If the project is assessed as high risk after using the [Risk Framework](#) (available in [the guide](#)), the integrating authority must be accredited.

Agencies are encouraged to use the Commonwealth arrangements for all external projects during this initial implementation period. This will help in minimising the general risk presented during the execution of a data integration project. Other data integration projects that satisfy the first three criteria, but are not external projects may also utilise the Commonwealth arrangements for data integration, if this is the preference of data custodians. Data users wishing to apply for access to Commonwealth data for a data integration project should discuss their proposal with the Commonwealth data custodian(s).



Please be advised that the scope of the Commonwealth arrangements is subject to change at the discretion of the Cross Portfolio Data Integration Oversight Board.

Help for conducting data integration projects

As part of the implementation of the Commonwealth arrangements, a [guide](#) has been released to assist stakeholders when conducting statistical data integration projects involving Commonwealth data.

The guide provides practical advice on how to comply with the Commonwealth arrangements, including guidance on the planning, management and approval processes for stakeholders of data integration projects.

The [guide](#) is a living document and will be updated and enhanced as required. It is available at govspace.gov.au and comments can be made directly on the relevant pages or by email to statistical.data.integration@nss.gov.au.

For more information

To learn more about the Commonwealth arrangements and their development, see the Statistical Data Integration pages on the [National Statistical Service website](#) or contact the Cross Portfolio Data Integration Secretariat at statistical.data.integration@nss.gov.au