B10: Guidance on Design of Business Rules for Integrated Data Systems

- Who is this tool for? Health and social protection practitioners involved in data linkage for population targeting, and considering whether changes may be needed to business rules as a result of these linkages. This documents gives an overview of some global best practice, as well as links to example rules for guidance.
- How was it produced? As this specific topic was not covered in detail by the JLN Learning Collaborative on Population Targeting, the following is general guidance produced by one of the subject matter experts supporting the collaboratives work, Pip O'Keefe.

When preparing for sharing data across agencies, one thing to be mindful of is whether there may need to be any adjustment in the business processes and workflows of each organization to accommodate the exchange of data and its use in the business operations. This may not require fundamental adjustments in processes, but it is important to assess what adjustments may be needed.

In order to assess whether such adjustments may be needed, it is first necessary to have a clear picture of current business processes in each organization which may be impacted by data sharing and use of those data. The ease or otherwise of getting such a picture will depend on how well current business processes related to population targeting are documented. They may already be documented in standard operating procedures (SOPs) or not. If they are not already documented, a first step is a review of existing processes in the relevant parts of each organization. This involves a few steps:

- Build an overview of the relevant process flows with respect to targeting data and its use. This should clearly document which sections/staff of the agency are in charge of relevant processes (the process owners) and delegate the recording of processes to those departments/individuals.

- Building on the overview, create a more detailed process flow chart, providing a brief written explanation and a definition for every "box" and "decision" object in the flow chart detail. This step helps define the purpose and scope of individual procedures, and references any corresponding process flow details and work instruction documents. The flow chart should capture: (i) list of roles in executing the process; (ii) list of steps to undertake the process; (iii) handoff points between departments in executing the process where relevant; and (iv) exceptions in the process. Ideally it should also identify problems with the existing processes based on inputs from operational staff. Documentation should also record the business process's technological components and infrastructure.

Based on this quick review of the "as-is" process, the involved agencies should then discuss across the agencies how their internal business processes and workflows may need to be adjusted in order to facilitate data sharing and use of the shared data in operations. This should be done with the involvement of the relevant agencies' staff who will be involved in the data sharing process and inputs from the end users of the data. It should include recommendations to optimize or streamline the current procedure, and an explanation of what staff training may be needed as revised processes are implemented.

If there are adjustments needed in business processes or workflows, the agencies should coordinate to revise step-by-step instructions for each departmental procedure and add them to or revise the previous operating procedure document. This is the document that employees should be able to reference to help perform their duties—with little to no assistance from anyone else. To ensure that the important details of each revised business process are documented, it is useful to use a "step by step" format. Using dot points or a numbering system when outlining each process step makes the information easy to read and understand. Each business process should include information such as who will be involved and their role in the process, how it works, the input and output and what area of the business it affects. The relevant parts can then be included in any standard operating procedures of each agency.

Examples in practice

To view some practical examples of business rules for integrated data systems, please follow the following three links. These are not from the social protection sector, as making such documents public could create a security threat, but will nonetheless have many parallels to what practitioners working on population targeting data linkages will need to create:

- Business Rule Group - an overview
- What Are Business Rules and What Is Their Importance?
- 10 Business Rules Examples in Process Automation