



# ABS Corporate Plan





# ABS

## Corporate Plan



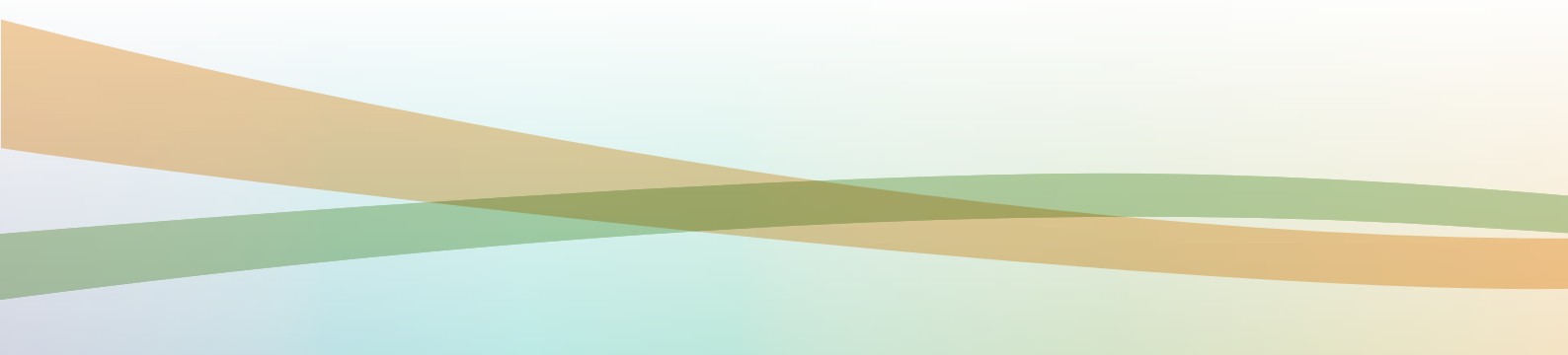






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# Foreword

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is Australia's national statistical agency. The ABS provides key statistics on a wide range of economic, environmental and social issues. The ABS also plays an important leadership and coordination role in relation to the statistical activities of other official bodies, both within Australia and internationally.

The availability of trusted statistical information to inform public debate and enable effective decision-making is fundamental to open government and democracy. As the world becomes more complex and interconnected, the importance of quality, accessible and timely information regarding Australia's circumstances increases.

The ABS continues to be regarded as a world leader amongst national statistical agencies. However, we face a number of challenges including increasing demands for more timely and diverse statistical data as our economy, society and environment evolve. Additionally, we operate in a fast changing information landscape and we are constrained by a tight financial situation. As Australia's official statistical agency, our ability to effectively respond to these challenges is key to our ongoing success. We need to ensure that high quality official statistics are readily available to governments and the community when key decisions about the future of our nation are made.

In response to this, the ABS has embarked on a significant journey of change – the ABS 2017 Program that will transform the way we collect, manage and deliver information and statistics. Without this change, our ability to achieve our mission into the future is at risk; we will not be able to continue to fund our existing work program, nor respond effectively to the changing needs of our users.

In short, we are actively inventing a future unlike the past. This will require new ways of thinking and new skills. The reward will be timelier, more relevant, and lower cost statistical information which can measure new components of society, the economy, and the environment – providing a fuller picture of Australia's progress.

## The 2012-13 to 2015-16 Corporate Plan

I am pleased to present to you our Corporate Plan – a Plan that captures who we are, what we want to achieve in the long-term and how we aim to get there.

While this Corporate Plan reinforces our values and mission, it now presents a long-term vision – our aspiration for what the organisation should be like in five to ten years. This complements our mission which describes the fundamental purpose of the ABS – why we exist as an organisation.



Supporting achievement of our vision and mission is a renewed Strategic Framework that captures the ABS's goals, strategies and outcomes. It provides clear links between different elements of the ABS work program and our program of change, linking the work that staff do with the goals of the organisation.

This plan also reflects the progress made over the last few years to strengthen planning and governance within the ABS. The key elements of the Corporate Plan shape our annual work program, as outlined in the ABS Forward Work Program, as well as the day-to-day delivery of statistical services. How well we deliver on our key strategies and achieve the goals we set is detailed in the ABS Annual Report.

## What the Corporate Plan means for the ABS

This Corporate Plan has been designed to serve as our guide for the next few years, as we continue to adapt to the changing environment in which we operate. Each project we undertake and the services we deliver must support the realisation of our organisational goals.

Success in achieving these goals rests on all of us – working together towards the same outcomes with each of us having an important part to play.

We continue to strengthen our capacity to effectively plan and enhance the way we operate through regular communication with each other about how the goals, strategies and outcomes in this Plan relate to group, division, section and team plans. Leaders and managers will play a vital role in building this capacity. Clearly demonstrating how we each play a part in delivery of our mission and achievement of our vision will ensure that our individual and team contributions and expertise are aligned.

Working together, I am confident that our efforts will continue to address the challenges we face and produce the results we set out to achieve, while reinforcing the need for us to remain true to our values and belief in the importance of our role as Australia's national statistical agency.

**Brian Pink**  
**Australian Statistician**  
**July 2012**









# ABS Vision

*A trusted and progressive world-class statistical leader*









## ABS Mission

*We assist and encourage informed decision-making, research and discussion within governments and the community, by leading a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service*





## ABS Role

Trusted official statistics are fundamental to democracy; they inform public debate, enable good decision-making across all sectors of society and are central to effective government.

The ABS is Australia's national statistical agency. As stated in our mission, the ABS has two key roles: as a producer of official statistics and as a leader within the National Statistical Service (NSS) coordinating statistical activities across official bodies.

The ABS is the main producer of official statistics in Australia. Our mission explains that 'we assist and encourage informed decision making, research and discussion within governments and the community'. The term 'community' in our mission is all encompassing – it includes organisations outside the government sector, as well as the Australian people and key users of our data internationally.

### Our functions

There are two key pieces of legislation which enable the ABS to deliver on its mission: the *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975*; and the *Census and Statistics Act 1905*.

The *Australian Bureau of Statistics Act 1975* establishes the ABS as an independent statutory authority, with Section 6(1) describing the six functions of the ABS as being to:

- ▶ operate as the central statistical authority for the Australian Government and provide services for the state governments;
- ▶ collect, compile, analyse and disseminate statistics and related information;
- ▶ coordinate the statistical operations of official bodies;
- ▶ develop standards for statistics and ensure that they are used;
- ▶ give advice and assistance to official bodies on the production and use of statistics; and
- ▶ liaise with international organisations on statistical issues.



The *Census and Statistics Act 1905*:

- ▶ empowers the Australian Statistician to collect statistical information on a broad range of demographic, economic, environmental and social topics;
- ▶ enables the Australian Statistician to direct a person in writing to provide statistical information, in which case they are legally obliged to do so;
- ▶ requires us to publish the results of these statistical collections; and
- ▶ places a life-long obligation on all ABS officers to maintain the secrecy of information collected under the Act, and provides harsh penalties for those who fail to do so.

The ABS mission and legislated functions clearly acknowledge the ABS's important leadership and coordination role with respect to the statistical activities of other official bodies in Australia, and a liaison function with international organisations on statistical matters. These relationships provide an opportunity to exchange knowledge, build capability, improve practices and influence statistical standards. Within Australia, the ABS does this by 'leading a high quality, objective and responsive national statistical service' as stated in our mission.

### What is the National Statistical Service (NSS)?

The NSS is a community of government agencies working to build a rich statistical picture in order to better inform Australia. The NSS comprises both producers of statistics and custodians of administrative datasets which have the potential to contribute to official statistics. It also embraces all levels of government.

By supporting the development of the NSS, the ABS aims to realise the full potential of statistical information not only for the benefit of government, but also the broader Australian and international communities. Unlocking the value of statistical assets will contribute to reducing data provider burden in Australia. The ABS will also continue to raise awareness of the important role to be played by quality data in shaping the decisions made today regarding Australia's future.





# Our Values

(What we believe and how we behave)

ABS employees are Australian Public Servants and are required to uphold the Australian Public Service (APS) Values (\*). These values set out the behaviour expected of all Australian public servants in the work that they do.

## APS Values\*

### Committed to Service

The APS is professional, objective, innovative and efficient, and works collaboratively to achieve the best results for the Australian community and the Government.

### Ethical

The APS demonstrates leadership, is trustworthy, and acts with integrity, in all that it does.

### Respectful

The APS respects all people, including their rights and their heritage.

### Accountable

The APS is open and accountable to the Australian community under the law and within the framework of Ministerial responsibility.

### Impartial

The APS is apolitical and provides the Government with advice that is frank, honest, timely and based on the best available evidence.

(\*). At the time of release of this document, the new APS values and the words used to describe them are proposed, and are yet to be formally endorsed or confirmed.



The ABS has a complementary set of values which underpin the work that we do to deliver on our mission as Australia's national statistical agency. These values are drawn from the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and are consistent with the values of many national statistical agencies around the world.

## ABS Values

### Integrity

- ▶ We operate in a way that encourages trust – we publish statistics from each survey we conduct, publish the dates for release of our statistics and ensure early access to our statistics is strictly controlled under publicly known arrangements.
- ▶ Our data, analysis, and interpretations are independent and objective.
- ▶ We adopt and advocate sound statistical principles and practices which are open to scrutiny.
- ▶ We are honest about our mistakes and take prompt action to correct them.

### Trust of providers

- ▶ We protect the confidentiality of information provided to us.
- ▶ We respect the contribution made by data providers and seek to minimise the burden placed on them.
- ▶ We explain why information is being collected and how it will be used.

### Relevance

- ▶ Our statistics are timely and we provide information about their quality to inform their use.
- ▶ We collaborate with stakeholders to address the most important data needs to inform policy and research.
- ▶ We stay ahead – identifying and planning for the next generation statistical needs in order to meet Australia's ever changing information needs.
- ▶ We achieve statistical coherence by adopting relevant nationally and internationally recognised standards and frameworks.







### **Professionalism**

- ▶ We strive to achieve the highest professional standards and commit to continuous improvement.
- ▶ We invest in our employees' development to ensure the ABS has the leadership capability and skills it needs now and in the future.
- ▶ We endeavour to achieve quality that is 'fit for purpose'.
- ▶ We explain our decisions on statistical matters and work priorities.

### **Access for all**

- ▶ Our statistics are available to all, presented in a way that is understandable and freely available on the web.
- ▶ We work to improve accessibility to our statistics and those of other agencies through more effective communication and statistical coordination.
- ▶ We develop the statistical capability of both governments and the Australian community to use and interpret information.
- ▶ We strive for accurate representation and interpretation of our information through the media.

### **Service**

- ▶ We engage with our clients to effectively understand and address their data needs.
- ▶ We build client trust by responding to their requests in a timely manner and providing explanations when we are unable to satisfy requests.

# Our People

(How we work together)

It is our people who will ensure we are a successful and sustainable organisation. Preparing our people for the future will enable us to deliver on our mission and work towards achieving our vision. Our success as an organisation is a shared responsibility. Regardless of the role we play in the organisation, we all contribute to achieving our vision and goals, and delivering on our mission.

The ABS People Plan (reviewed annually) aims to promote and support development of a people-focused culture. It focuses on building core capability, strengthening leadership, retaining and engaging current employees, attracting and recruiting new employees and gaining a greater understanding of our workforce.

What employees can expect from the ABS:

- ▶ a healthy and safe work environment where diversity is valued;
- ▶ to be treated with respect and fairness;
- ▶ flexible working arrangements to support work life balance;
- ▶ opportunities to learn and develop capability;
- ▶ recognition and reward of high performance; and
- ▶ consultation and open communication.

What the ABS expects from employees:

- ▶ working in ways that uphold the APS and ABS Values, and the APS Code of Conduct;
- ▶ performance to achieve results;
- ▶ a willingness to be adaptable and flexible when dealing with change;
- ▶ commitment to deliver continuous business improvement through collaboration and innovation;
- ▶ inquisitive thinking to support ongoing learning; and
- ▶ taking responsibility for working safely.

The ABS strives to actively support and engage our people, especially when changes occur that impact on the way they and the organisation works. In working together, the organisation fosters a well-led, highly skilled and engaged workforce. This ensures that the ABS continues to be well positioned to take on the challenges of the future.





# ABS Goals, Strategies and Outcomes

To ensure that we deliver on our mission and realise our vision, the ABS has agreed on a set of goals, strategies and outcomes to inform the work that we do and our future investment. The goals describe what it is we aim to achieve as an organisation.

The strategies summarise how we aim to achieve the ABS goals. They underpin the ABS Forward Work Program and our annual priority setting process.

## **GOAL: INFORMED AND BETTER USE OF AUSTRALIA'S STATISTICAL ASSETS**

### **Strategies**

Deliver high quality, objective and flexible official statistical solutions.

Improve accessibility, timeliness and relevance of Australia's statistical information.

Improve the management and informed use of official statistical information.

### **Outcome**

*Timely high quality statistical information that is readily accessible.*

## **GOAL: CONTINUED TRUST AND SUPPORT OF PROVIDERS**

### **Strategies**

Effective engagement with providers.

Develop solutions that maintain confidentiality but unlock the value of information.

### **Outcome**

*Engaged, responsive and supportive providers who trust the ABS.*







The outcomes describe what success will look like once our goals are achieved. Our progress toward achieving the goals and outcomes is measured regularly and reported internally biannually and externally through the release of the ABS Annual Report.

**GOAL: LONG-TERM ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY**

**Strategies**

Better prepare our people for the future.

Transform our business systems and processes.

Foster our ability to innovate.

**Outcome**

*A capable and productive organisation.*

**GOAL: RESPECTED LEADER IN THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL COMMUNITIES**

**Strategies**

Enhance the coordination of, and investment in, the National Statistical Service.

Build strong statistical capacity and capability domestically and within the Asia-Pacific region.

Shape and influence national and international discussions regarding statistical frameworks and policies.

**Outcome**

*The ABS is influential and sought after for independent information, advice and expertise.*





# ABS Strategic Planning and Governance

The ABS has a well-established strategic planning cycle, as presented on page 18. In order to deliver on the ABS mission and achieve its vision and goals, a strong approach to planning is adopted. Robust governance is used to guide decision making.

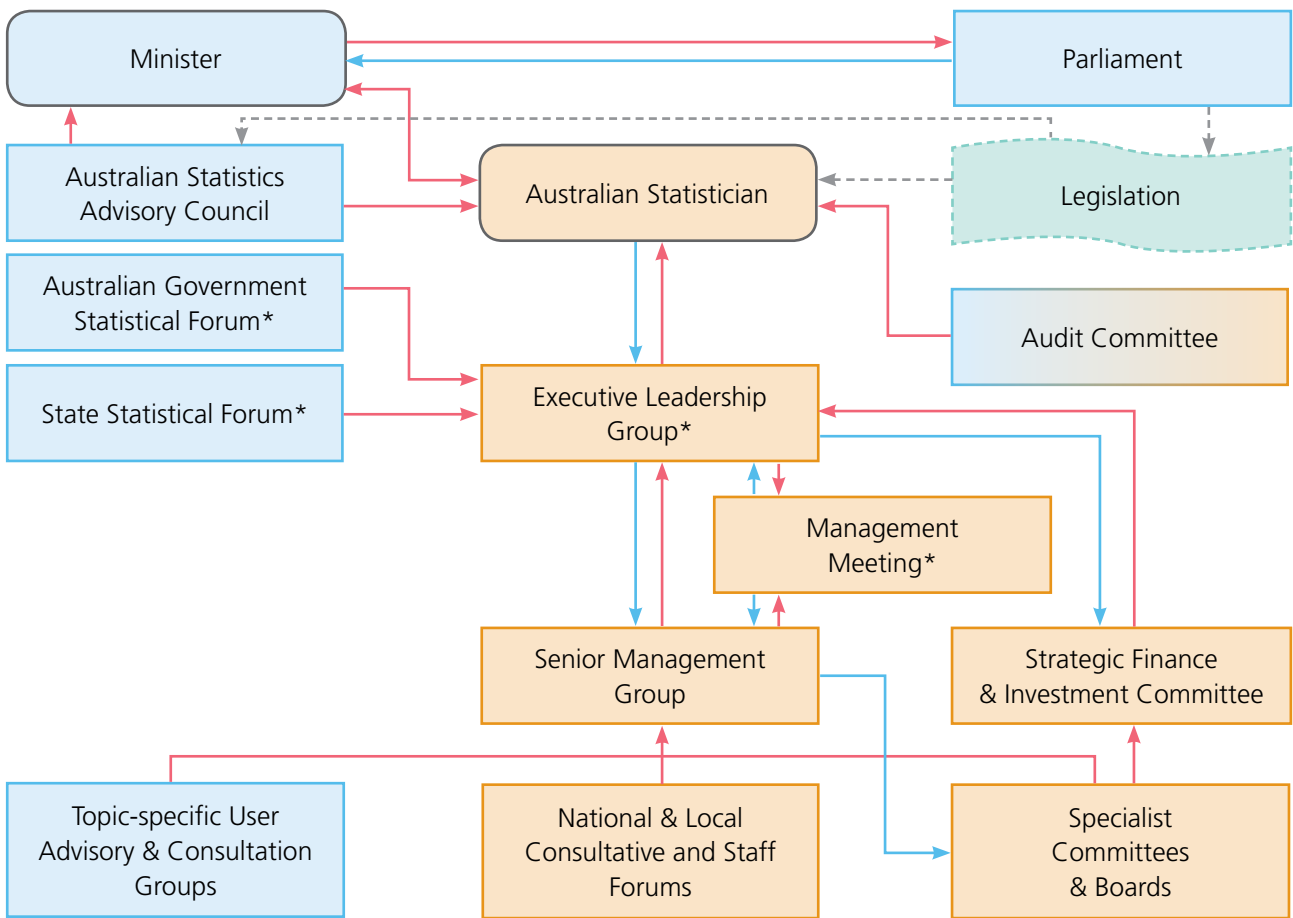
Annually, the current and emerging context within which the ABS operates is assessed through environmental scanning. At the same time, progress in addressing enterprise risks is reviewed and emerging risks are identified. The outcome of this analysis then guides assessment at biannual ABS Management Meetings as to whether existing priorities and non-negotiable parameters around decision making are the right ones or should be refined.

Through business planning, strategy turns to implementation. Progress towards achievement of the ABS goals and outcomes, and delivery of our business in alignment with our strategies is actively monitored by executive and senior management forums. Through these governance arrangements, internal progress reporting and monitoring occurs biannually. External reporting occurs through the annual publication of the ABS Portfolio Budget Statement and the ABS Annual Report.

Staff Development and Performance Agreements are framed to ensure each ABS staff member has a clear understanding of the link between the work they do and what the ABS aims to achieve for Australia.

## ABS Governance Model

This diagram provides an overview of the ABS's governance framework and does not include all governance mechanisms for the ABS.



**Key**

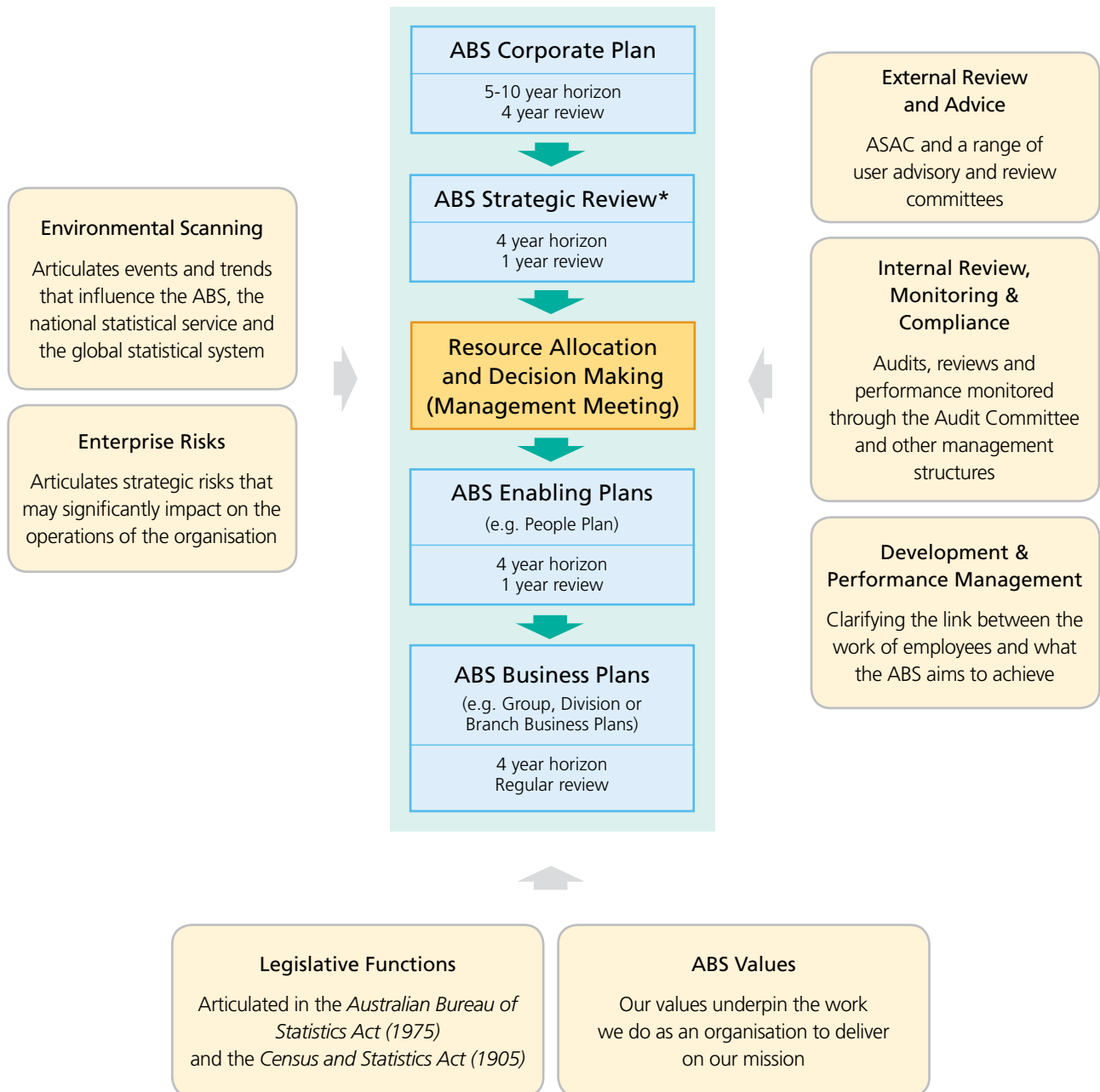
- Decisions for implementation
- Proposals or issues for decision
- - - -> Legislation
- \* Chaired by Australian Statistician

Committees, groups or forums that mainly consist of:

- External members
- Internal members
- Individual

Notes:  
Further information about the role of the ABS senior management committees is available in the Governance and legislation section of the ABS Forward Work Program (ABS cat. no. 1006.0)

## ABS Strategic Planning Cycle



\*The ABS Strategic Review occurs annually at the ABS Management Meeting and involves an assessment of our priorities and non-negotiable parameters around decision making. The non-negotiable parameters guide ABS management decision-making for achieving our goals in times of complexity, change and competing priorities.



