

Information Outside the Readiness Sampling Frame

Short supplementary practitioner note – field-derived practices being tested through applied research

Context	UN CSTD Working Group on Data Governance at All Levels, 7th meeting — possible relevance to existing work on implementation capacity, interoperability and data governance
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1 The problem: information outside the sampling frame

Large transformation programmes cannot inspect an entire information estate before commitment. Readiness exercises therefore work from a sampling frame: observable records, catalogues, repositories, declared ownership, documented processes and other evidence that can be sampled or requested. This works for information that exists in, or is reachable from, that frame.

Across more than 50 federated entities and more than 6,000 interconnected systems, two load-bearing classes repeatedly sat outside that frame. Tacit or distributed information existed only in people, routines or non-overlapping fragments. Institutionally undeclared (declaration-dependent) information did not yet exist as an authoritative fact: the organisation behaved as if there were an owner, boundary, canonical source or decision, but no competent actor had established one.

A sampled assessment can therefore look satisfactory while a critical condition is absent from the frame. Expanding the same search may add cost without producing the missing information; in declaration-dependent cases the answer appears only when the organisation makes a decision, which can itself change responsibilities, systems and behaviour.

Research question: can the probability, type and expected cost of these hidden information deficits be estimated before full discovery, by measuring the response — and non-response — generated when the organisation is asked to answer critical questions?

2 From practitioner practice to a tested Quality Plan

The Cost of Clarity, submitted under Enterprise Estonia's RUP applied-research programme, tests this beyond our own field case. TalTech's Information Systems and Next Gen Digital State groups support the scientific development; QAVA at the Universitat de València contributes to quantitative dependency and cascading-effects work.

It collects diagnostic and Quality Plan practices from dozens of practitioners and completed cases across multiple organisations: what they actually asked, what evidence they requested, how they handled absent or contradictory answers, and which practices were associated with successful or failed transformations.

Completed cases are reconstructed from original decision evidence; candidate criteria are operationalised and culled retrospectively; surviving criteria are used in sealed pre-commitment readings, followed by fuller verification and longitudinal comparison with realised outcomes. The output is a measurable Quality Plan in which practices remain only if they survive evidence.

3 Examples of measures now being tested

The measures intentionally reuse established constructs where useful. What is being tested is whether their combination can estimate information states outside ordinary readiness sampling — and survive ground-truth verification.

Candidate measure	Operational measurement	What it tests
Tacit / distributed share	TD = critical conditions recoverable only through independent elicitation or triangulation / critical conditions verified.	Measures knowledge that exists but is absent from sampled artefacts.
Declarative burden	DB = critical conditions requiring an authorised declaration before an answer exists / critical conditions tested.	Separates unfound information from information not yet institutionally created.
Retrieval friction	RFh = total human acquisition hours / verified critical answers. Contacts/handoffs and elapsed days are recorded alongside the ratio.	Uses search effort as a signal of deficit depth and cost.
Persistent human mediation (HID proxy)	HM = recurring person-hours spent reconciling undocumented definitions, dependencies or exceptions / total governance and coordination hours.	Measures the hidden human layer sustaining apparent readiness.

Cascading effects are tested downstream: do these signals predict later rework, delay, stalling or value loss, and do modelled dependencies match observed consequences?

4 Possible use in CSTD's existing work

For CSTD, this is offered as practice and evidence input to existing work. The Secretariat can route the note, measures, case definitions or later findings to whichever current track, stock-taking activity, background material or smaller expert exchange is most relevant. No change to the 7th-meeting agenda is requested.

We can share underlying practices and later aggregated findings. Relevant evidence questions identified by the Working Group can still be reflected in the study; comparable practitioner measures would help test what transfers across organisations and jurisdictions.

Field base: more than 50 federated entities and more than 6,000 interconnected systems. Applied-research extension: practitioner evidence across multiple organisations, retrospective reconstruction and prospective validation.