

NATIONAL SHARED SERVICES OFFICE

Strategy 2021 - 2023

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Oifig Náisiúnta
um Sheirbhísí
Comhroinnte

National
Shared Services
Office

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Foreword

This is the second Statement of Strategy for the National Shared Services Office (NSSO) as a statutory Civil Service Office which was established in 2018. This Strategy has been developed following publication of the Programme for Government - Our Shared Future.

We are an ambitious organisation that delivers real value:

- to the people who rely on us for services, by providing an easily accessible and efficient service across a broad range of pay, pension, leave and recoupment services
- to the organisations that use our corporate business services, by delivering mass transactional services and business intelligence so freeing up local resources for strategic management and improving business decision making, and
- to the taxpayer, in the context of providing these services in a standardised and cost-efficient way.

We operate under the aegis of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and partner with that Department to modernise, transform and lead efficiency and renewal of the Public Services. Our activities implement many of the Department's policy objectives, in particular we lead process and digital innovation.

Our people have the skills and tools to provide our client organisations with efficient reliable execution of these key transactional processes, and we harness emerging technology to improve and simplify processes, and to implement enhancements/changes in a controlled and standardised way. As well as providing shared services to our Civil Service partners we work to promote the use of shared services across the wider Public Service.

The NSSO looks forward to consolidating and expanding the services it delivers to its partners in the Civil Service over the coming years.

Hilary Murphy Fagan
Chief Executive

Robert Watt
Chairman of Advisory Board

Our vision, mission and values

Our mission as a Civil Service office is to deliver excellent service to Civil and Public Service staff, (our end-users) on behalf of our client Public Service Bodies and deliver value for money to citizens by providing excellent corporate business services and data insights to Government. We set high standards for shared services in the Public Service, and we work in partnership with our customers to deliver quality fit-for-purpose services that lower costs, increase efficiency, and provide information to management to aid decision-making. We advocate for investment in new technology to deliver better processes and data analytics for the business services that Government needs. We set standards for shared services for the whole public service.

Our vision for the NSSO is to be a customer-focused, innovative, and learning organisation, setting the standards for and providing consistently high quality shared services and data insights that support business needs. Trusted by others, we will build a strong culture that is collaborative, performance-driven, and people-focused.

Our values, building on the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour, are:

- **People first:** The key to our success is our people, and we are committed to putting people, performance, and development at the centre of what we do.
- **Process and digital innovation next:** We strive for process simplicity, and we foster a mind-set that is alive to continuous improvement.
- **Service excellence always:** Our aim is to deliver operational improvements and an agile customer experience rooted in our desire to be better and to meet our customers' needs.

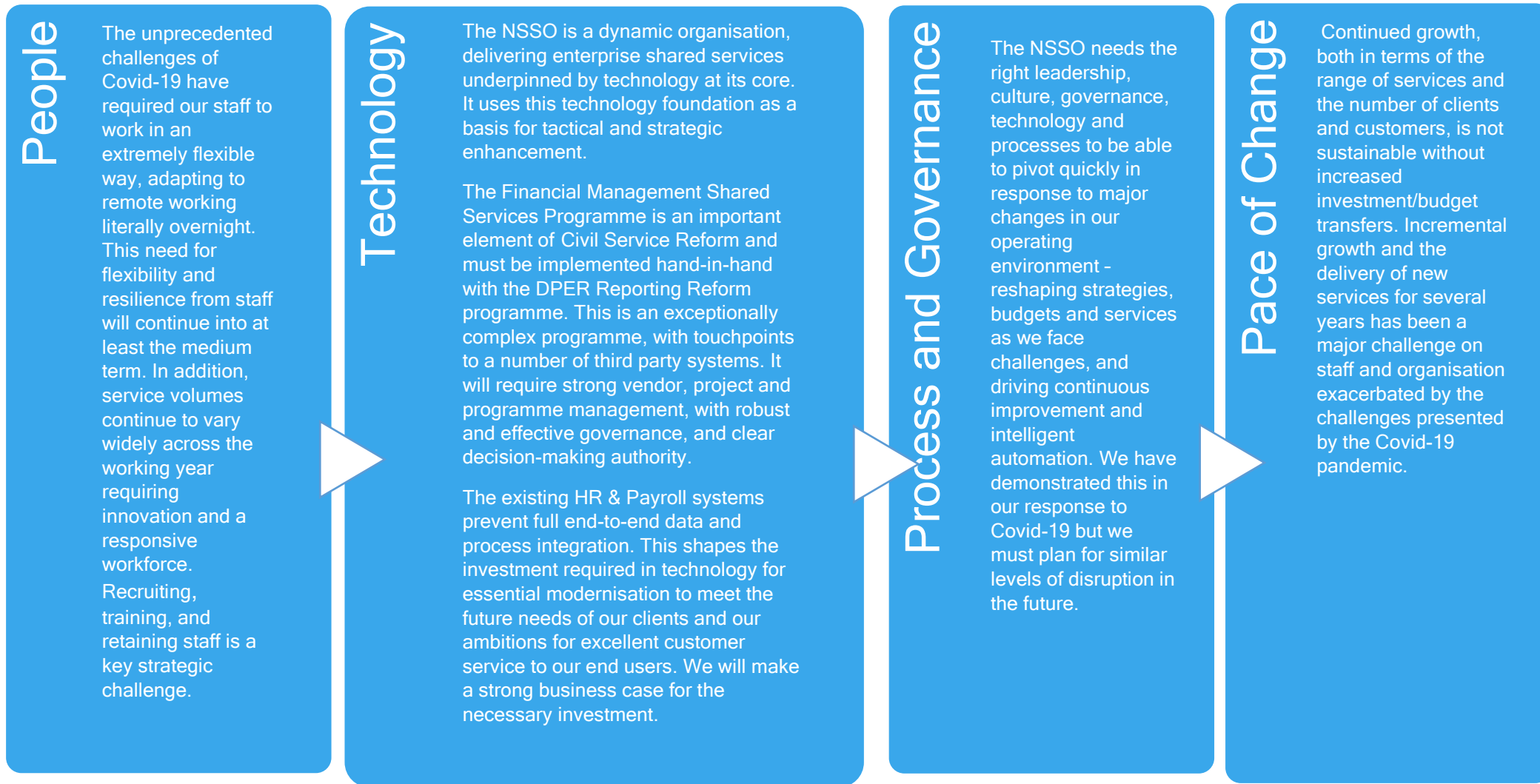
In short, our ambition is to be an increasingly progressive, trusted and professional organisation and a great place to work.

Opportunities and Threats from our current environment

- **Covid-19:** The NSSO, along with the entire public service, has already shown great agility and creativity in dealing with the unprecedented Covid-19 crisis. This need for agility and creativity in dealing with challenging and rapidly changing circumstances is very likely to continue for some time. This period of rapid change has given us the opportunity to develop new ways of working, and to deploy our skills in new areas, for example by providing call-centre support to other Government Departments and Offices as they responded to the crisis.
- **Acceleration of underlying trends:** In the years leading up to the current crisis rapid technological and social changes had been leading us towards a fully interconnected society. This will profoundly change the world of work. Organisations will have to become ever more agile, and will have to adapt to, and profit from, new flexible and mobile approaches to work. The current Covid-19 crisis is accelerating these trends. When the world returns to a new normal, the NSSO will have to embrace new ways of working and will have to empower its PSB clients to do the same.
- **Strategic Management vs Transaction Services:** Our clients in the Civil and Public Service face a complex, challenging and fast moving domestic and international environment. Now, more than ever, they need to concentrate their resources and expertise on strategic management of the social and economic issues for which they are responsible. The NSSO can free up our clients' resources to concentrate on their core missions by taking on and centralising important, but non-core administration activities. Our focus on transaction services creates the opportunity to provide them in a cost-efficient and standardised way, to continuously improve these services and to adapt quickly to changes. For example the NSSO was able to partner with the Office of the Revenue Commissioners to implement PAYE modernisation for the entire civil service.
- **Civil and Public Service Reform:** is a continuous process and the NSSO is a member of the Civil Service Renewal 2030 Taskforce. The NSSO plays a key role in implementing many aspects of Civil Service reform on behalf of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. As the Public Service becomes more mobile, flexible and accountable the demands placed on the NSSO will increase. The management information that the NSSO can provide will be essential for the strategic management of the Public Services. The financial management services that the NSSO is preparing to provide will further improve reporting and decision making by providing accruals-based financial information for enhanced fiscal transparency. Consistent standardised HR and finance processes provided by the NSSO are an essential core element in building "One Civil Service" that supports mobility, efficiency and consistency of service, and standard data for comparability and central reporting. The NSSO will support the implementation of the new HR Operating model to enhance HR capabilities and deliver significant civil service-wide improvements.

- **Data and Cyber Security:** Data is the business of the NSSO. New technologies such as Cloud Computing and Artificial Intelligence will allow the NSSO to process client data more efficiently and expand the services that it can provide to its clients based in this data. The security and proper use of personal data are large and growing areas of public concern. The General Data Protection Regulation provides a comprehensive framework for protecting the interests of all of European citizens in the safe, confidential, and appropriate use of their data. The NSSO must continue to meet the highest standards in its handling of personal data and build expertise in dealing with emerging cyber security threats.
- **Shared Services Leadership:** The NSSO has a key leadership role in Public Service Shared Services. It must become an exemplar and demonstrate best practices in Shared Services for the Public Sector. The NSSO is also part of a larger global shared services industry sector. This provides important opportunities to adopt global best practices and showcase Government and Ireland as a leading location for the Global Business Services industry sector.

Key challenges in our operating environment



Key risks for the NSSO

People

As noted above, Covid-19 has brought unprecedented challenges to every aspect of our operation, but most of all for our people. Our staff must be organised to deliver optimal coordination between functions as well as strong operational management and risk management. They must have the capability to deliver self-service data analysis, and digital innovation.



Technology

Our HR and Payroll systems are being integrated and updated to enhance services, increase security and mitigate risks.

In parallel the Financial Management Shared Services programme is progressing the deployment of a single Financial Management System for Central Government. The NSSO must ensure that this strategic investment realises the benefits intended: retiring legacy disparate financial and reporting systems with each Wave deployed; producing financial data in a standardised reporting format for Central Government; and, delivering accrual accounting and enhanced fiscal transparency.



Process and Governance

A robust risk management process is in place, but the NSSO recognises the need to continuously enhance these processes to reflect new risks, and to ensure that risk management is embedded in our ways of working. The NSSO also continues to challenge our ways of working with a view to addressing legacy system processes which the NSSO inherited upon its formation, and seeking efficiencies through better ways of working.



Pace of Change

There must be an acknowledgement that change must be aligned with investment. If it is not, then some change may necessarily be deferred. If the necessary resources are not available the expansion and improvement of our services will be delayed.

Actions identified to mitigate these risks

- Continuing to work together to operate on a remote and flexible working basis to provide our services to the rest of the Civil and Public Service.
- Strengthening, developing and investing in our people, and adapting the organisation to the new normal that will emerge once the Covid-19 crisis has passed. The NSSO will have to operate in a new more agile way, and will have to support its client PSBs as they adapt to a changed environment. This will include an organisation capability review early in the term of the Strategy.
- Continuous improvement and renewal of our technology to expand our services and enhance security.
- Strong Project and Vendor Management in the deployment of the new Financial Management System. Effective governance structures in place to manage the design and adoption of the new system. Cross-NSSO support for end-to-end solution deliverables.
- Upgrading, integrating and eventual replacement of legacy disparate HR and Payroll systems.
- Implementing a focused, centralised and calibrated risk management policy supported by procedures and training for all management staff.
- Operations of the Advisory Board, Audit and Risk Committee, Internal Audit function and fraud policy and procedures.

Approach

The NSSO will continue to implement the reforms of the Civil and Public Service developed by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. In particular we will provide data and insights to our PSB clients, embed and spread a culture of innovation in our staff, and support our client PSBs as they face major challenges such as the current Covid 19 pandemic and planning for Brexit.

As a service organisation, the NSSO relies on its people for success and we will continue to engage, develop and invest in our staff. Our response to Covid 19 has helped us to reengage, enable and focus on our people in a renewed way. We will build on this to become more effective by overcoming functional siloes to unlock responsive, innovative thinking.

For the wider Civil Service we will continue to support the implementation of the People Strategy for the Civil Service 2017-2020 and its successor. In particular we will continue to improve and upgrade our technology to enhance our services and reinforce our security. We will review our organisational capability early in the term of this Strategy.

Innovation is central to our mission and values. We will play a key role in the Public Service-wide vision of harnessing the power of innovation to deliver world-class public services in Ireland. The NSSO has a culture of innovation, over the term of this Strategy we will work to scale up our innovative efforts by connecting and collaborating with colleagues across the Public Service. The business intelligence we deliver to our clients will drive transformative innovation by providing them with strategic insights into future trends and requirements. Early in the term of this Strategy we will develop an Innovation Strategy to define how the NSSO will implement the wider Public Service Innovation Strategy for citizen-centric innovation, developing a culture of innovation, scaling innovation across the Public Service and transformation through innovation.

The Financial Management Shared Services Programme has remobilised and commenced the deployment path for a single Financial Management System for Central Government. This is a large, complex technology and organisation transformation programme and requires robust project management, strong governance and visible sponsorship from the Civil Service Management Board (CSMB) to ensure that it goes live on time and in budget. A risk and assurance framework, aligned with key milestones and deliverables reporting and a detailed Integrated Project Plan, is in place to ensure that the programme remains on track and in budget.

The NSSO will need to invest in next generation technology to improve both the quality and speed of our services. We will deploy cloud technology where possible and exploit Artificial Intelligence to become a centre of expertise in Robotic Process Automation, rapidly accelerating and improving the digital work environment across the Civil Service through better access to employee data through business intelligence and enhanced workflow and integration of our IT platforms, more effective customer engagement, and more flexible ways of working through enhanced integrated HR and Payroll technology.

The NSSO also provides guidance and support to the other Public Service sectors of Education, Health and Local Government, as they advance their individual Shared Service plans. Shared Services is a Government policy and evaluation of benefits delivered is led in each sector in line with their individual Shared Service plans. Ultimately the NSSO's success can reinforce Ireland's leading position as a location for Global Business Services centres, gaining industry recognition for scale and NSSO practices.

The NSSO's Goals for 2021-2023



Goal 1: Deliver Excellent Shared Corporate Services

Provide Public Service Bodies with excellent shared services and the benefits that these efficient and effective services create.



Goal 2: Engage, Enable, and Empower our People

Engage, enable, and empower our people to promote continuous innovation and change.



Goal 3: Invest in New Digital Technologies

Exploit the full potential of modern technological platforms, systems, and solutions.



Goal 4: Champion Shared Services Across the Public Sector

Establish the NSSO as a trusted partner for Public Service Bodies and promote the use of the shared services approach to service delivery.

Goal 1: Deliver Excellent Shared Corporate Services

Provide Public Service Bodies with excellent shared services and communicate the benefits that these efficient and effective services create		
Priorities	Actions to implement these Priorities	Outcomes and KPIs for 2023*
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be open, transparent, and inclusive with the partner organisations we serve. 2. Integrate the functions of the NSSO into a unified organisation that provides a seamless, end to end user experience. 3. Design and implement a new customer focus programme that fosters strong partnerships with Public Sector Bodies (PSBs). 4. Drive continuous improvement throughout the NSSO in pursuit of service excellence, in particular increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of our services. 5. Embed the practice of capability assessment, capability building, and succession planning for designated roles throughout the NSSO. 6. Strengthen compliance and risk management functions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement a common NSSO customer service approach for employee services covering training reporting, cyber and data security. • End-to-end integration of HR and Payroll systems. Further integration with Financial Management System when operational. • Continuous improvement of processes and services. We will develop and implement an NSSO innovation strategy covering our services, processes and technology. • Establish and engage with an end-user forum. • Engage and inform clients by holding events to show our governance and assurance structures. • Expand the Business Intelligence provided to NSSO clients • Strengthen second line of defence to ensure compliance 	<p>By 2023 public service bodies will enjoy excellent service from the NSSO across end-to-end services and will consider the NSSO a strategic business partner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased customer satisfaction. (Target: Increased “satisfaction” score on customer surveys compared to 2019 baseline of 52%) along with an Action Plan addressing the key findings from the survey. • Achieve 95% quality score for HRSS and PSS reflecting effective service to PSBs and our customers. (Target: 95% pass rate on weekly / biweekly process quality checks). • Revised and updated service targets and delivery of these as outlined in the Employee Service Management Document with the PSBs - percentage of targets met (Target: 90 %+). • Prompt, effective responses to customers across a range of channels and further system upgrades that will facilitate increased self-service facilities, amongst other improvements. • Accurate and timely payroll processing. (Target: 100%) • Overpayments attributable to NSSO reduced from 2020 levels. (Target: Less than 500 overpayments caused by NSSO during 2023). • Value of NSSO as a strategic business partner evidenced by introduction of new services to meet evolving needs of our clients

Goal 2: Engage, Enable and Empower our People

Engage, enable, and empower our people to succeed in their roles, and deliver continuous innovation and change		
Priorities	Actions to implement these Priorities	Outcomes and KPIs for 2023*
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a new People Strategy that matches the NSSO’s ambition and strategic goals, and is aligned to the People Strategy for the Civil Service. 2. All managers working as a group to create the future ways of working for the NSSO. 3. Invest in the development of the extended leadership team (ELT) and the strategic management of NSSO, ensuring that substantive supporting mechanisms are in place. 4. Invest in the development of our people to achieve their career development goals and objectives. 5. Establish a highly collaborative culture where self-directed and high-performing teams own their work and are empowered to innovate. 6. Recognise and embed exemplary people management and development practices throughout the NSSO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement new ways of working and organising staff as they emerge in the post Covid world. • Develop and implement a HR strategy identifying the skillsets needed up to 2023. • Skill map our existing team. • Redesign and implement an enhanced induction programme for all new staff. • Executive leadership training. • Peer to peer mentoring programme. • Roll out a leadership development programme. • Review organisational capacity. • Adapt staff development and engagement actions to an environment with large scale remote working. 	<p>By 2023 our people will have built an organisation that is a great place to work, validated by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently achieving positive results in civil service-wide engagement survey. • Capacity and competency model in place for the NSSO by 2021. • Career pathways and professionalisation for NSSO staff in place by 2021. • Staff recognition programme in place. • Culture of high performance - active performance management and coaching throughout the organisation by 2021. • Staff turnover matches Civil Service levels.

Goal 3: Invest in New Digital Technologies

Exploit the full potential of modern technological platforms, systems, and solutions		
Priorities	Actions to implement these Priorities	Outcome and KPIs for 2023*
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review our ICT strategy to ensure that it supports the NSSO Strategy so that it optimises the power of people and technology. 2. Adopt a digital-first policy to underpin all future developments in the NSSO’s service portfolio. 3. Invest in the ongoing modernisation of ICT platforms and related systems and solutions. 4. Strengthen our IT and cyber security to protect the data we hold, taking account of increase in frequency of cyber-attacks. Develop an end-to-end view of key corporate services and exploit the potential of new technologies to promote cross-functional integration. Develop and test every aspect of our BCP. 5. Give PSBs and public servants the tools and skills to use self-service technologies across all platforms, while preserving access for all users. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interim upgrade of Payroll system completed in 2021, and upgrade of HR system completed in 2023. • Upgrade and integrate technology used for Payroll and HR Shared Services, deploying cloud and exploiting AI where possible. • As noted under Goal 1, we will develop and implement an NSSO innovation strategy covering our services, processes and technology. Single website to access all NSSO services. • Focus on fit for purpose technology that is proven and reliable rather than leading edge. • Design for remote working environment and ensure data workflow is fully automated and integrated, and service moving to digital delivery, eliminate manual interventions. • Ensure the security of the NSSO against cyber-attack through a combination of IT security, training and awareness measures for staff and countervailing internal controls. 	<p>By 2023 we will deploy the full potential of digital technologies in support of service excellence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish a report of the findings of the RFI for an integrated technology solution. • Active programme of technology replacement underway, and AI technologies (RPA). • Active risk programme for cyber security including review and testing of IT third party security protocols and controls, and operating system security, and monitor and report annually. • Accurate, reliable technology supporting our services - evidenced by measures of quality service in customer surveys. • Continuous improvement of processes by digitisation and reduction in manual intervention.

Goal 4: Champion Shared Services across the Public Sector

Establish the NSSO as a trusted partner for Public Service Bodies and Shared Services as a valued approach		
Priorities	Actions to implement these Priorities	Outcome and KPIs for 2023*
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a new communications strategy that engages both internal and external stakeholders. 2. Play our part in modernising and reforming Human Resources across the Public Service. 3. Expand our services to existing partners by rolling out financial management shared services to existing partners and providing employee services to new clients. 4. Work with PSBs to fully exploit the value of the data we hold, applying analytical techniques to the data we generate. 5. Enhance awareness of the benefits being realised by Shared Services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the new communications strategy adopted in 2020. • Onboard new clients as appropriate and subject to governance, resourcing and financial impacts on the NSSO addressed, as required. • Enhance the governance, capability and risk structures of the Financial Management Programme, and adopt the learnings to date to ensure effective roll out of services to PSBs on a phased basis. • Develop new business intelligence services for PSBs. • Organise annual conference on Shared Services in the Public Service. • Track and communicate realised benefits of Shared Services against original expectations through existing governance structures. 	<p>By 2023 we will be a strategic business partner to Public Sector Bodies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a risk and assurance framework for FMSS programme, reporting on key milestones for sponsors and DPER Senior User. • FMSS fully remobilised, and in deployment phase - KPI: number of PSBs who are using the service (Target: on track with revised implementation plan). • An enhanced and embedded Governance structure for the FMSS Programme, encompassing extensive Stakeholder Engagement and Reporting. • NSSO Communications Strategy implemented by the end of 2023. • Value added for clients - KPI: timely provision of any new services. • Public Service Bodies understand the benefits realised from Shared Services - develop and report KPIs to show overall efficiency and effectiveness achieved by NSSO

*These KPIs represent achievement of Strategic Goals by the end of 2023. A Business Plan is developed each year which sets out detailed KPIs for progress towards these goals in each year. These are monitored throughout the year by the Management Board.

Appendix - NSSO Governance Structures

