

# **BRITACOM Virtual Seminar 3, 8 April 2021**

## **Tax-related Data Governance and Application**

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### Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore, IRAS

1. IRAS is the main tax administrator to the Government of Singapore and we collect taxes that account for about 70% of the Government Operating Revenue. We provide services in the administration of taxes and we also represent Singapore internationally on tax matters.

### The Tax Administration Landscape

2. Tax administrations are facing challenges from many major global trends. Regulatory issues are now cross borders and taxpayers are more demanding. They demand for greater transparency to better understand government policies and at the same time also demand for better protection on privacy. Technology is advancing at an ever-increasing speed and digitalisation is a given. Big data is getting bigger and raises new challenges on data management.
3. With such a backdrop, keeping up is no longer an option. The change needs to be transformative and immediate. In this transformation journey, data quality management plays a key role. Even with advance Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning capabilities, we cannot derive more insights beyond what the details allow.  
  
Transformation has to be done through sound strategies, backed by strong management will and supported by competent human resource.
4. We believe having high voluntary tax compliance is the most sustainable long-term strategy in ensuring cost effectiveness in IRAS. We achieve this through making tax policies and processes simple for taxpayers to comply.

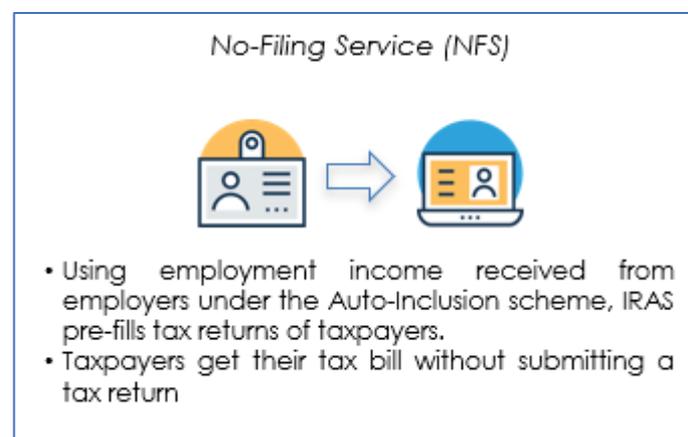
### Our Core Beliefs

5. One of our fundamental beliefs is that, majority of the taxpayers want to be compliant and we want to make compliance easy and where possible, a non-event. That leads us to the next core belief of 'no-need-for-service is the best service'. To do what we believe in, we need to be fuelled by good quality data.

## Managing Data Quality by Taking the Whole-of-Government Perspective

6. Having good quality data is not just for IRAS and it is also not just for the purpose of tax administration. We need good quality data for the whole of government and supports other functions within the Government. In that way, we work as one government serving the people of Singapore in an integral and coherent manner.
7. IRAS collects data from other parts of government as well as non-government organisations such as banks, employers and Insurance companies.

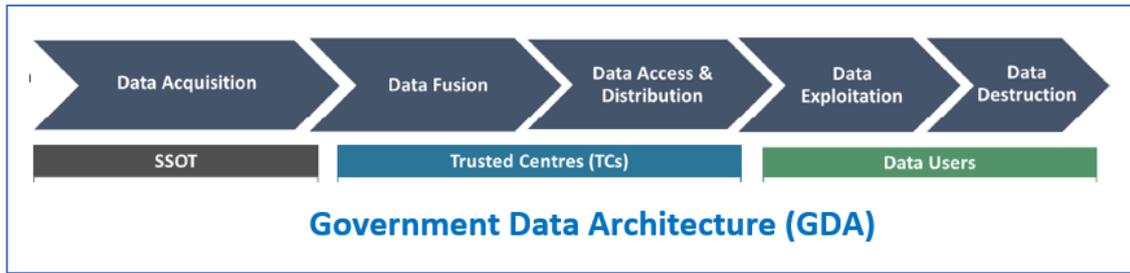
We collect data of quality to improve processes such as tax assessment, providing seamless services such as the No Filing Service, as well as gaining insights so that we can be anticipatory in our strategy and policy.



8. IRAS does not manage data quality in isolation. Under the Government Data Architecture (GDA), we contribute core data to the whole of government and also benefit from the use of core data contributed by other government agencies. Data quality is managed at the whole-of-government level.
9. Under the GDA, core data is consolidated and made discoverable. A core data is data that is of use to multiple agencies. It is contributed by a Single Source of Truth (SSOT) which is an authoritative source for the core data.

A Trusted Centre (TC) takes the core data from SSOTs and fuse multiple datasets into a single dataset that is of use for the whole of government. It also distributes datasets in a secure and efficient way.

Data users can request data from the TC for policy, research, operation or service purposes.



10. IRAS acquires data based on the following principles:
  - a. Government Data: Leverage Government Data Architecture (GDA)
  - b. Non-Government Data: Acquire at source through external organisation's natural systems
  - c. Acquire data from the Whole-of-IRAS perspective
  - d. Acquire data for operational as well as analytical and longitudinal study purposes
11. For the data we acquire, we apply these principles to attain quality:
  - a. Apply it throughout data lifecycle
  - b. Do it right from the start
  - c. Solve data quality issues at the root

### The People and Technology

12. People and technology are important pillars for data quality management.
 

We are organised based on the Federated Data Governance model where data strategy and policy are centrally defined and business decision-making and data ownership remain with business units. The data community includes Data Stewards, Data Custodian and Data owners with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. We promote constant learning and sharing within the data community.

We leverage technology to collect data to minimise human error or intervention. For example, we collect data using APIs (Application Programming Interface) and set validation rules to minimise data errors.
13. Strategies and technologies are implemented by our people and we enable and empower them to do that. It is important that they have the right mindset and contemporary skillsets to play their roles in the data community. We want them to always put taxpayers in the centre of all issues and think of data exploitation in all solutions. To do that, we uplift their skill set so that they can apply design thinking, do analytics and understand behavioural insights.

## Final Thoughts

14. In conclusion, our aim is to maximise voluntary compliance. To that, we need good insights into taxpayer needs and understand what would work best for them. To that, we need data not just as the new oil but the new refined oil.
15. In closing, I would leave you with these two key messages:
  - A good strategy begins with a good understanding of our taxpayers.
  - A good outcome rests on the capabilities of our people to deliver it.
16. Thank you.



The information presented in the slides aims to provide a better general understanding of taxpayers' tax obligations and is not intended to comprehensively address all possible tax issues that may arise. This information is correct as at the date of presentation. While every effort has been made to ensure that this information is consistent with existing law and practice, should there be any changes, IRAS reserves the right to vary its position accordingly.