



Report on

ICN Agencies' Experiences in Gathering and Using Information for Effective Strategic Planning

By the ICN Agency Effectiveness Working Group, 2023

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Introduction

Effective strategic planning can help an agency achieve its objectives successfully by clearly identifying and setting clearly defined goals that are measurable. To develop a robust and effective strategic plan, it is generally advisable that an agency draws upon a wide range of information sources to help identify its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (“SWOT”), as well as to better understand its current and future operating environment. These information sources should ideally cover all the relevant stakeholders including external stakeholders like consumers, businesses, government agencies, as well as internal stakeholders like the agency’s staff and management. Overseas competition agencies also serve as a valuable information source to learn international best practices.

The ICN Agency Effectiveness Working Group (AEWG) project on “Gathering and Using Information for Effective Strategic Planning” is part of the multi-year project on “Planning, Monitoring and Measuring Effectiveness” to look into ICN member agencies’ best practices and experiences in identifying clear objectives and strategies, assessing progress as well as evaluating effectiveness. In this part of the project, the AEWG examined the information sources which ICN member agencies tapped on to develop effective strategic plans, the types of information gathered from each information source, the channels utilized to get information from each information source, the factors/criteria used to decide which information is relevant for developing its strategic plans, as well as the challenges faced and practical tips on gathering and assessing the information. This report summarises the responses of ICN member agencies to a survey on these areas.

The Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (CCCS) was the project lead on behalf of AEWG co-chairs, the Mexican Federal Economic Competition Commission (COFECE) and the Hungarian Competition Authority (GVH).

1. Information about the responding agencies

1.1 Overview of the responding agencies

A total of 40 ICN member agencies submitted responses to the survey between August and October 2022. The general breakdown of these responding agencies is:

<i>No. of staff in agency working on competition-related matters</i>	
• Small (1-49 employees):	13 agencies (32.5%)
• Medium (50-99 employees):	12 agencies (30.0%)
• Large (≥100 employees):	15 agencies (37.5%)
<i>Non-competition related functions</i>	
• Yes:	28 agencies (70.0%, mainly related to consumer protection, sectoral regulation and public procurement)
• No:	12 agencies (30.0%)
<i>Geographic representation</i>	
• Africa:	4 agencies (10.0%)
• Asia:	4 agencies (10.0%)
• Europe:	21 agencies (52.5%)
• North & South America:	8 agencies (20.0%)
• Oceania:	3 agencies (7.5%)

1.2 Types of strategic plans which agencies develop to guide their work

Agencies develop a variety of strategic plans to guide their work. A majority of agencies (31 out of 40 agencies, 77.5%) develop at least 2 types of strategic plans of different durations.

38 agencies (95.0%) have Short Term plans of 1-2 years duration (e.g., Annual Workplans), 31 agencies (77.5%) have Medium Term plans of 3-5 years duration (e.g., 5-year Strategic Plans / Frameworks), and 6 agencies (15.0%) have Long Term plans of more than 5 years duration.

Table 1: Types of strategic plans developed by each responding agency

<i>Agency (in alphabetical order by country within each region)</i>	<i>Short Term</i>	<i>Medium Term</i>	<i>Long Term</i>	<i>Others</i>
Africa				

<i>Agency (in alphabetical order by country within each region)</i>	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Others
Competition and Consumer Authority (Botswana)	✓	✓	✓	-
Competition Authority of Kenya	✓	✓	-	-
Competition Commission (Mauritius)	✓	-	-	-
Competition Commission of South Africa	✓	✓	-	-
Asia				
Agency for Protection and Development of Competition of the Republic of Kazakhstan	✓	✓	✓	-
Korea Fair Trade Commission	✓	-	-	-
Malaysia Competition Commission	✓	✓	-	-
Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore	✓	✓	-	-
Europe				
Austrian Federal Competition Authority	✓	✓	✓	-
Commission on Protection of Competition (Bulgaria)	✓	-	-	-
Croatian Competition Agency	✓	-	-	-
Office for the Protection of Competition (Czech Republic)	✓	✓	-	-
Eurasian Economic Commission	✓	✓	-	-
Directorate General for Competition (European Commission)	✓	✓	-	-
Georgian National Competition Agency	✓	✓	-	-
Bundeskartellamt (Germany)	✓	✓	✓	✓ ¹

¹ The Bundeskartellamt follows a non-formalized approach carried out both by the decision divisions and the leadership of the BKartA in very close cooperation and coordination. It includes medium and long term planning (e.g., by pooling expertise in particular divisions or setting-up new units to reinforce capabilities) as well as short term priority setting and allows a

<i>Agency (in alphabetical order by country within each region)</i>	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Others
Hungarian Competition Authority	✓	✓	-	-
Icelandic Competition Authority	✓	✓	-	-
Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (Ireland)	✓	✓	-	-
Competition Council of Latvia	✓	✓	✓	-
Competition Council of the Republic of Lithuania	✓	✓	✓	-
Agency for Protection of Competition (Montenegro)	✓	-	-	-
Commission for Protection of Competition (Serbia)	✓	✓	-	✓ ²
Antimonopoly Office of the Slovak Republic	✓	✓	-	-
National Commission of Markets and Competition (Spain)	✓	✓	-	-
Swedish Competition Authority	✓	✓	-	-
Swiss Competition Commission	✓	-	-	✓ ³
Competition and Markets Authority (UK)	✓	-	-	✓ ⁴
Antimonopoly Committee of Ukraine	✓	-	-	-
North & South America				
Administrative Council for Economic Defense (Brazil)	✓	✓	-	-
Competition Bureau Canada	✓	✓	-	-

constant adjustment to new developments while at the same time ensuring reliable, competent decision-making and long-term stability.

² Ad hoc.

³ The planning of the Swiss Competition Commission is organized on different levels and includes focusing on strategic key areas as well as annual workplans. The planning of the strategic key areas is re-evaluated on a yearly basis, but they can be left unchanged for several years. One of the key drivers of the planning of resources is the prioritization of important investigations and to achieve the general target that investigations should on average not take longer than two years.

⁴ The CMA issues strategic plans for certain areas of its work, having issued its Digital Markets Strategy in February 2021, a refresh of a document first published in 2019.

<i>Agency (in alphabetical order by country within each region)</i>	Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term	Others
Superintendence of Economic Competition (Ecuador)	-	✓	-	-
Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Competition (Honduras)	✓	✓	-	-
Jamaica Fair Trading Commission	✓	✓	-	-
Federal Economic Competition Commission (Mexico)	✓	✓	-	-
National Institute for the Defense of Competition and the Protection of Intellectual Property (Peru)	✓	-	-	-
Trinidad and Tobago Fair Trading Commission	-	✓	-	-
Oceania				
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission	✓	✓	-	-
Autorité Polynésienne de la Concurrence (French Polynesia)	✓	✓	-	-
New Zealand Commerce Commission	✓	✓	-	-

2. Information sources tapped on by responding agencies and information gathered

An agency may tap multiple information sources to obtain information for developing its plans. The variety of information sources can provide an agency with a wider perspective and useful information to inform its strategic plans. This section provides a summary of the responding agencies' responses on the types of information sources they utilize, the common types of information they gather from these information sources and the common methods used to gather the information from these information sources. For this project, external information sources refer to sources that reside outside the agency, while internal information sources refer to those that exist within the agency.

2.1 Types of information sources

Responding agencies used a variety of external and internal information sources to formulate their strategic plans. The top 5 information sources are from "Businesses" (external), "Management and / or Staff" (internal), "Data Analytics and / or Data on Complaints and Cases" (internal) "Overseas Competition Agencies" (external), and "Government Agencies / Sectoral Regulators" (external).

Table 2: Number of agencies that tapped on each information source

Information source	% of responding agencies that tap this source (no. of agencies)
External Information Source	
Businesses	95.0% (38)
Overseas Competition Agencies	92.5% (37)
Government Agencies / Sectoral Regulators	87.5% (35)
Consumers	82.5% (33)
Competition Practitioners (e.g., Lawyers, Legal / Economics Consultants, Academics)	77.5% (31)
National Development / Economic Plans	75.0% (30)
Internal Information Source	
Management and / or Staff	95.0% (38)

Data Analytics and / or Data on Complaints and Cases	95.0% (38)
Intelligence / Environment or Horizon Scanning / Research / SWOT Analysis	62.5% (25)

The other information sources which the responding agencies tapped on include:

- External – multinational competition platforms (e.g., OECD, ICN), studies, publications and newsletters on competition from specialized organisations, courts' case law.
- Internal – Internal Committees / Working Groups

2.2 Types of information sources utilised for developing strategic plans of different durations

Different combinations of information sources were utilised for developing strategic plans of different durations. For short term plans, agencies typically use information obtained from “Businesses” (external), “Overseas Competition Agencies” (external), “Management and / or Staff” (internal), and “Data Analytics and / or Data on Complaints and Cases” (internal). In comparison, the top three information sources which responding agencies with Medium Term plans tap on for such plans are “Businesses” (external), “Competition Practitioners” (external), and “Management and / or Staff” (internal).

Table 3: Proportion of agencies with Short Term, Medium Term or Long Term plans that used each information source

Information source	% of agencies with Short Term plans that tap on this source for their Short Term plans	% of agencies with Medium Term plans that tap on this source for their Medium Term plans	% of agencies with Long Term plans that tap on this source for their Long Term plans
External Information Sources			
Businesses	78.9% (30 out of 38 agencies)	80.6% (25 out of 31 agencies)	33.3% (2 out of 6 agencies)
Competition Practitioners	55.3% (21 out of 38 agencies)	83.9% (26 out of 31 agencies)	33.3% (2 out of 6 agencies)
Consumers	68.4% (26 out of 38 agencies)	51.6% (16 out of 31 agencies)	16.7% (1 out of 6 agencies)

Government Agencies / Sectoral Regulators	76.3% (29 out of 38 agencies)	77.4% (24 out of 31 agencies)	50.0% (3 out of 6 agencies)
National Development / Economic Plans	47.4% (18 out of 38 agencies)	71.0% (22 out of 31 agencies)	33.3% (2 out of 6 agencies)
Overseas Competition Agencies	78.9% (30 out of 38 agencies)	71.0% (22 out of 31 agencies)	50.0% (3 out of 6 agencies)
Internal Information Sources			
Management and / or Staff	84.2% (32 out of 38 agencies)	83.9% (26 out of 31 agencies)	33.3% (2 out of 6 agencies)
Data Analytics and / or Data on Complaints and Cases	84.2% (32 out of 38 agencies)	71.0% (22 out of 31 agencies)	50.0% (3 out of 6 agencies)
Intelligence / Environment or Horizon Scanning / Research / SWOT Analysis	57.9% (22 out of 38 agencies)	45.2% (14 out of 31 agencies)	16.7% (1 out of 6 agencies)

2.3 Key information obtained

The responding agencies gathered a large variety of information from the information sources. Generally, the information gathered can be categorised into forward looking information (e.g., emerging trends, areas for potential collaborations, sectors / priorities which the agency will look into in the coming years) and historical information (e.g., feedback on the agency's activities / performance, markets / sectors information, anticompetitive conduct encountered).

The most common types of information gathered from external information sources are "Emerging trends" (4 out of 6 external information sources), and "Feedback on the competition agency's activities and effectiveness, and the competition regulatory framework" (3 out of 6 external information sources). For internal information sources, the most common types of information gathered are "Markets / sectors information" (2

out of 3 internal information sources) and “Review of agency’s work” (2 out of 3 internal information sources).

Table 4: Summary of the key information gathered from each external information source

External Information Sources	
Businesses (38 agencies indicated tapping this source): The main information types obtained from this source include:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emerging trends and areas which the competition agency should focus on 	47.4% (18 out of 38 agencies)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas of potential collaborations with businesses – <i>for competition law compliance; to strengthen competition advocacy</i> 	36.7% (14 out of 38 agencies)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on markets and business sectors – <i>market dynamics and challenges; business structure and operational models; business sentiments; state of competition and impediments to competition in the market</i> 	31.6% (12 out of 38 agencies)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anticompetitive conduct encountered including markets and business sectors where the competition agency should focus on 	31.6% (12 out of 38 agencies)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback on the competition agency’s activities and effectiveness, and the competition regulatory framework – <i>awareness, perception and understanding of the competition agency’s initiatives and performance; awareness and understanding of the competition law; opinions on revisions to laws; suggestions for competition policy; areas for improvement including proposals for regulatory improvement</i> 	31.6% (12 out of 38 agencies)
Competition Practitioners (31 agencies indicated tapping this source). The main information types obtained from this source include:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emerging trends and areas which the competition agency should focus on 	71.0% (22 out of 31 agencies)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback on the competition agency’s activities and effectiveness, and the competition regulatory framework – 	67.7% (21 out of 31 agencies)

<p><i>perception of the competition agency's initiatives and performance; opinions on revisions to laws; suggestions for competition policy; areas for improvement including proposals for regulatory improvement</i></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expertise, research and views on competition matters and information on markets and business sectors – <i>market dynamics including the economic structure and evolution of the markets; general views on the state of competition in the markets; markets and business sectors where anticompetitive conducts were encountered / may potentially occur; business sentiments and operational concerns / regulatory burdens relating to competition</i> 	<p>51.6% (16 out of 31 agencies)</p>
<p>Consumers (33 agencies indicated tapping this source). The main information types obtained from this source include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-competitive conduct encountered including markets and business sectors where the competition agency should focus on 	<p>75.8% (25 out of 33 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on the competition agency's activities and work – <i>awareness, perception and understanding of the competition agency's initiatives and performance</i> 	<p>33.3% (11 out of 33 agencies)</p>
<p>Government Agencies / Sectoral Regulators (35 agencies indicated tapping this source). The main information types obtained from this source include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging trends and areas which the competition agency should focus on 	<p>42.9% (15 out of 35 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities and work initiatives of the government agencies / sectoral regulators – <i>reviews and changes in regulations, policies and legislation; markets and business sectors which the government agencies will look into; identification of business sectors to be opened to competition and the timing of the opening; data and news related to sector regulators on competition</i> 	<p>40.0% (14 out of 35 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of potential collaborations with government agencies / sectoral regulators 	<p>40.0% (14 out of 35 agencies)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on industries / regulated sectors – <i>market data & analysis; outlook on markets; dynamics and challenges of regulated sectors; developments and outlook of industries / sectors</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">25.7% (9 out of 35 agencies)</p>
<p>National Development / Economic Plans (31 agencies indicated tapping this source). The main information types obtained from this source include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National economic policy direction – <i>priorities; priority sectors; action plans including areas for policy review and government reforms; business sectors to be opened to competition and the timing of the opening; economic challenges for regulated sectors and their impact on the economy</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">58.1% (18 out of 31 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General provisions of national plans as background information for the competition agencies' plans and competition related information – <i>long term trends in key economic sectors; emerging trends, current competition trend; target areas for competition enforcement; information on the need for competition law advocacy</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">35.5% (11 out of 31 agencies)</p>
<p>Overseas Competition Agencies (37 agencies indicated tapping this source). The main information types obtained from this source include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emerging trends 	<p style="text-align: center;">51.4% (19 out of 37 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sectors which the overseas competition agencies will look into in the coming years including sectors for market studies / research 	<p style="text-align: center;">35.1% (13 out of 37 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on the overseas competition agencies and areas for collaborations – <i>best practices of the overseas competition agencies (including enforcement and advocacy tools); work done and / or being carried out by overseas competition agencies (e.g., enforcement cases)</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">32.4% (12 out of 37 agencies)</p>
<p>Internal Information Sources</p>	

<p>Management and / or Staff (38 agencies indicated tapping this source). The main information types obtained from this source include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities setting, focus sectors and areas for market investigations 	<p>68.4% (26 out of 38 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to agency to be more effective and efficient – <i>capacity building; personnel development; resource management; internal structure and processes; employee satisfaction and engagement; digital transformation</i> 	<p>31.6% (12 out of 38 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of agency’s work – <i>concluded cases and new / on-going investigations; ex-post economics evaluation; challenges faced by the agency; achievements from previous plan; effectiveness of current strategy to address issues</i> 	<p>28.9% (11 out of 38 agencies)</p>
<p>Data Analytics and / or Data on Complaints and Cases (38 agencies indicated tapping this source). The main information types obtained from this source include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Markets / sectors data, information and analysis 	<p>63.2% (24 out of 38 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints data 	<p>44.7% (17 out of 38 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of agency’s work – <i>incoming cases, stock of cases and output; impact of actions; achievements and failures; direct economic benefit of planned activities; improvements required for cases; investigation processes; to anticipate changes in governance, future resources and staffing needs for agency’s work</i> 	<p>31.6% (12 out of 38 agencies)</p>
<p>Intelligence / Environment or Horizon Scanning / Research / SWOT Analysis (25 agencies indicated tapping this source). The main information types obtained from this source include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Markets / sectors information – <i>markets’ competition conditions; market / sector monitoring; presence of certain behaviours in the market; potential sectors for enforcement, advocacy, capacity building, intelligence gathering</i> 	<p>72.0% (18 out of 25 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging trends and operating context 	<p>44.0% (11 out of 25 agencies)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWOT Analysis 	<p style="text-align: center;">28.0% (7 out of 25 agencies)</p>
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2.4 Methods to gather information

“Meetings and direct engagements” was the most commonly cited method employed by the responding agencies to gather information from each external information source (top method for 4 external information sources). This method is preferred as it gives the agencies the opportunity to clarify / have follow-on discussion with the information sources on the information provided, as well as to enhance their relationships with these information sources. However, this method is more resource intensive and has a smaller reach than through “Request for information”, which is also a commonly cited method utilised by the responding agencies.

The methods to gather information from internal information sources were not included in the survey given that these information sources reside within the agency.

Table 5: Key information gathering methods used for external information source

<p>Businesses (38 agencies indicated tapping this source). The key information gathering methods for this source include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings and direct engagements with business stakeholder groups including trade / business associations and key business representatives 	<p style="text-align: center;">65.8% (25 out of 38 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests for information via surveys, public consultations and sector inquiries 	<p style="text-align: center;">57.9% (22 out of 38 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints or information from businesses on anticompetitive behaviour 	<p style="text-align: center;">23.7 % (9 out of 38 agencies)</p>
<p>Competition Practitioners (31 agencies indicated tapping this source). The main information gathering methods for this source include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings and direct engagements with practitioners 	<p style="text-align: center;">61.3% (19 out of 31 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly available information – <i>academic and research papers; practitioners’ presentations at conferences, workshops, competition agency forums</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">41.9% (13 out of 31 agencies)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests for information via formal requests, surveys, public consultations and sector inquiries 	<p style="text-align: right;">35.5% (11 out of 31 agencies)</p>
<p>Consumers (33 agencies indicated tapping this source). The main information gathering methods for this source include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests for information via surveys, public consultations and sector inquiries 	<p style="text-align: right;">57.6% (19 out of 33 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Channels to report anticompetitive conduct 	<p style="text-align: right;">33.3% (18 out of 33 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions with consumer stakeholder groups and consumer associations 	<p style="text-align: right;">21.2% (7 out of 33 agencies)</p>
<p>Government Agencies / Sectoral Regulators (35 agencies indicated tapping this source). The main information gathering methods for this source include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings and direct engagements with government agencies / Sectoral Regulators 	<p style="text-align: right;">80.0% (28 out of 35 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requests for information via formal requests, surveys, public consultations and sector inquiries 	<p style="text-align: right;">31.4% (11 out of 35 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government meetings – <i>regulators network; government committees</i> 	<p style="text-align: right;">20.0% (7 out of 35 agencies)</p>
<p>National Development / Economic Plans (31 agencies indicated tapping this source). The main information gathering methods for this source include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from the government – <i>speeches from head of government; letters from ministry; plans / priorities of parent ministry; official documents on government plans and programmes; meetings and direct engagements with representatives from other government agencies / sectoral regulators</i> 	<p style="text-align: right;">58.1% (18 out of 31 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly available information 	<p style="text-align: right;">19.4% (6 out of 31 agencies)</p>

<p>Overseas Competition Agencies (37 agencies indicated tapping this source). The main information gathering methods for this source include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings and direct engagements with overseas competition agencies – <i>bilateral and multilateral meetings; visits to and from overseas competition agencies</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">62.2% (23 out of 37 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly available information on the overseas competition agencies' plans 	<p style="text-align: center;">56.8% (21 out of 37 agencies)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience / information sharing at international competition forums – <i>surveys, calls, meetings, workshops</i> 	<p style="text-align: center;">32.4% (12 out of 37 agencies)</p>

2.5 Challenges and useful tips for gathering information

External information sources

Generally, the challenges of gathering information from external information sources highlighted by responding agencies can be categorized into “Access of information” and “Usefulness of information collected”, which include:

Access to information:

- Limited / low number of responses from open consultations, and surveys, as well as low turnout for events to gather information.
- Scarcity of potentially relevant data and information.
- External information sources may not be willing to share information due to lack of trust or a strong relationship.
- Restricted access to confidential information held by external information sources.
- Administrative bureaucracy to get the information.
- Long response time taken by the external information sources.
- Limited scope to cooperate with external information sources (including information exchange) due to different objectives for cooperation between the agency and the external information source.
- Lack of or limited resources and expertise which limits the amount of information gathered.

Usefulness of the information

- Information may be biased / subjective (e.g., information gathered from consumers is often based on the individual aspects / experiences / characteristics of that specific consumer).
- Inability or limited opportunities to clarify / verify with the information source on their responses, in particular for requests for information via formal requests, surveys, public consultations and sector inquiries.

- Outdated information provided.
- Information source may not completely understand the questions or know how to formulate answers (e.g., government agencies may lack awareness of competition matters when formulating their responses).

The practical tips suggested by the responding agencies for gathering information from external information sources include:

People

- Have constant interactions with market participants and stakeholders, including having face-to-face and one-on-one meetings, participating in their events, and inviting them to participate in the agency's events.
- Identify the relevant stakeholders early in the strategic planning process, establish the correct contact person to ensure accuracy of information, and evaluate the relevance and usefulness of the information sources as well as look out for potential sources of information on a regular basis.
- Build up staff's capabilities to verify the information gathered, compare it with different sources and assess its quality.

Process

- Have regular communication and follow up with information source to explain the importance of the information, what information is required, why it is required and how it would be used.
- Enter into cooperation agreements which includes information exchange with key stakeholders.
- Strengthen policies and processes to maintain confidentiality of information.
- Gather information on a continual basis as part of intelligence gathering rather than specifically for planning purposes.
- Ask precise and detailed questions when requesting for information, and include qualitative questions to obtain more in-depth information and quantitative questions to introduce specific metrics and process data more directly and fast.

System

- Set up the agency's own system to generate quality and reliable information.

Internal information sources

For internal information sources, the challenges of gathering information highlighted by responding agencies are mainly in "Access to information" and these include:

- Need to improve IT systems to validate, process, and access information, as well as to extract aggregate information from internal sources automatically.
- Lack of or limited resources and expertise to collect the information.
- Time consuming to collect the information and it takes a lot of effort to engage with relevant staff to obtain the necessary information and to get the full participation of staff in making suggestions.
- No clear overview of internal information sources available.

- Information access restrictions as data protected by law.
- Lack of knowledge retention or knowledge transfer within the agency.
- Difficult to retrieve and systematize past data that is not electronically archived.
- Short turnaround time to collect the information and missed deadlines by the internal information source to provide the information.

Practical tips suggested by the responding agencies to improve the gathering of information from internal information sources include:

People

- Organise case teams according to sectors of the economy to allow the teams to build up a high level of knowledge and expertise of the sectors as well to keep up with the current developments in the sectors.
- Identify and formally appoint persons who are responsible for submitting the relevant information.
- Ensure staff recognize that the decision makers value and place substantial weight on the data and information from staff and to communicate the follow-up action(s) arising from staff inputs to show that staff inputs are taken seriously.

Process

- Use current established staff meetings / channels for gathering information from staff regularly instead of obtaining the information on a once-off basis.
- Have clear channels of communication and processes when gathering information from internal information sources.
- Organise off-site strategic meetings to avoid distractions and encourage open dialogue.

System

- Use systems for knowledge, document and information management.
- Use a staff feedback system that allows staff to see the inputs from other staff (anonymously) as this allows staff to build on the inputs of others and thus results in more fully developed ideas.

3. Assessing the information gathered

In order to develop a robust and effective strategic plan, an agency may gather a wide variety and huge volumes of information from many information sources. To assess the information gathered, the agency would need to analyse the information gathered and assess which information is relevant for its strategic plans. This section delves into the key factors / criteria which responding agencies use to sieve through the information gathered and the challenges they faced when doing so.

3.1 Key factors / criteria considered to prioritise the information gathered

Responding agencies reported that they used multiple factors / criteria to prioritise the information they gathered. The top key factor considered is “Information related to areas which have significant impact on markets, businesses and/or consumers”. The key factors / criteria used are (ranked from the most to least selected by the responding agencies):

1. Information related to areas which have significant impact on markets, businesses and/or consumers (35 agencies, 87.5%)
2. Information related to key sectors of the economy (29 agencies, 72.5%)
3. Information related to emerging trends (28 agencies, 70%)
4. Ability of the agency to act on the information (27 agencies, 67.5%)
5. Information related to priority areas in the National Development / Economic Plans (23 agencies, 57.5%)
6. Frequency which the information is brought up by the various information sources (23 agencies, 57.5%)
7. Information related to priority areas of the other government agencies / regulators / your agency’s parent Ministry (22 agencies, 55%)
8. Public policy / interest considerations (20 agencies, 50%)

3.2 Challenges and useful tips for assessing the information gathered

The challenges faced by the agencies in assessing the information gathered include the following:

- Limited resources including human resources, expertise and digital software to analyse the information.
- Information that is not complete, robust, and of good quality.
- Lack of homogeneity and comparability between different information / data sets (due to a wide variety of information sources) as well as inconsistencies in the information gathered may lead to misinterpretation and wrong conclusions.
- Outdated information / data.
- Too much information / data for the limited resources to analyse.
- Difficult to pick out the priorities and identify strategic projects from the wide range of information.

- Staff responsible for different areas (e.g., enforcement; advocacy; policy) may differ in their approaches to particular issues highlighted by the information collected.
- For agencies with other regulatory functions, it may be hard to coordinate between different regulatory units and the Competition unit, especially regarding topics that impact different units at the same time.
- Handling confidential information / data.
- Language barriers, especially for information on overseas competition agencies.
- Limitations on the information that can be obtained to identify anti-competitive conduct in markets (e.g., publicly available information may not report a merger and is not useful in identifying cartel conduct).

The responding agencies shared the following tips which were helpful to them for assessing the information gathered:

People

- Increase the number, improve the ability and ensure the continuity of the staff who are involved in analysing and assessing the information / data.
- The planning or intelligence team should comprise staff of different operational experience and expertise.
- Have cross functional meetings between departments of different functions and work areas to discuss issues together.
- Involve all staff in the process from beginning to end, especially those with specific and relevant expertise, experiences and skill sets.

Process

- Gather information with a clear purpose / an end-goal in mind rather than amassing information to find something.
- Request for information in a format that is suitable for the agency.
- Rely more on objective data and information rather than information which are subjective opinions.
- Develop clear and realistic forecasts of the organization's capabilities in the planning period, with the corresponding setting of realistic tasks.

System

- Have proper information filtering settings to eliminate poor quality and unreliable information sources.
- Have a special software to process and sort the information gathered.

Conclusion

Based on the survey responses, the competition agencies tap on various information sources for developing their strategic plans. In particular, more than 80% of the responding agencies tapped on each of these information sources – “Businesses” (external), “Overseas Competition Agencies” (external), “Government Agencies / Sectoral Regulators” (external), “Consumers” (external), “Management and / or Staff” (internal), and “Data Analytics and / or Data on Complaints and Cases” (internal).

The survey showed that responding agencies sought a wide variety of information from the information sources which includes “Emerging trends”, “Feedback on the competition agency’s activities and effectiveness, and the competition regulatory framework”, “Markets / sectors information” and “Review of agency’s work”. In addition, a large number of the agencies use “Meetings and direct engagements” to gather the information from external information sources. For prioritising the information gathered, responding agencies reported that they used multiple factors / criteria to prioritise the information they gathered and the top key factor considered is “Information related to areas which have significant impact on markets, businesses and/or consumers”.

A majority of the agencies gathered a large variety of information from multiple information sources to develop their strategic plans. However, they also expressed that they faced challenges in gathering and assessing the information. Based on the report findings, the ICN could consider providing forums for more sharing of experiences and best practices and technical assistance to support agencies to overcome the challenges they faced in the collection and assessment of the information.

Annex: Questionnaire



ICN Agency Effectiveness Working Group survey on “Gathering and Using Information for Effective Strategic Planning”

Planning, monitoring, and measuring agency effectiveness are vital steps to increase the likelihood of an agency successfully achieving its objectives. In view of this, the ICN AEWG embarked on a multi-year project on the “Planning, Monitoring and Measuring Effectiveness” project to look into ICN member agencies’ best practices and experiences in identifying clear objectives and strategies, assessing progress as well as evaluating effectiveness. Areas the project will explore include methods and processes employed by agencies to plan their work (e.g., annual planning, 5-year strategic framework), to monitor the progress of their plans or review their plans, and to measure effectiveness (e.g., key performance indicators and targets). The project will also explore the challenges agencies face in these areas.

In the first part of this project, the ICN AEWG will focus on ICN member agencies’ experiences in “Gathering and Using Information for Effective Strategic Planning”. Effective strategic planning can help an agency achieve its objectives successfully by clearly identifying its objectives and providing a basis for it to measure and assess its progress in achieving its objectives. To develop a robust and effective strategic plan, it is important that an agency draws upon a wide range of information sources to help identify its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as well as to better understand its current and future operating environment. This survey aims to collect information on the information sources (e.g. internal and external stakeholder consultations) which ICN member agencies tap on to develop effective strategic plans; the types of information gathered from each information source; the factors/criteria used to decide which information is relevant for developing its strategic plans, as well as the challenges faced and practical tips on gathering and assessing the information.

As your agency’s responses to the survey may be made public, please provide only non-confidential information. Please send your replies by **30 August 2022** to raymond_ng@cccs.gov.sg and yvette_yoong@cccs.gov.sg

Thank you very much for your kind support.

The ICN AEWG Co-chairs

GENERAL

1. Name of agency and contact person for this survey (name, title, email).

2. Please indicate the number of staff in your agency that work on competition enforcement (including administrative/support staff).

- 1–24 employees
 25–49 employees
 50–99 employees
 100–199 employees
 200+ employees

3. Please indicate the year which your agency was first established (if relevant, please include year of any re-establishment).

4. Please specify other non-competition functions (e.g., consumer protection, sectoral regulation) which your agency has (please select all that apply).

- No Other Functions
 Consumer Protection
 Sectoral Regulation
 Financial Regulation
 Public Procurement
 Others (please specify)

5. Please indicate the type of plans (or strategic priorities) which your agency develops to guide its work (please select all that apply).

Short term plans for 1-2 years (e.g., Annual Workplans)

Mid-term plans for 3-5 years (e.g., 5-year Strategic Plans / Frameworks)

Long term plans for >5 years

Others (please specify)

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INFORMATION GATHERING

External Information Sources

6. Please select the key **external** information sources which your agency taps on to develop its plans; and specify the types of information gathered and how the information is gathered from the selected information source.

Information Source <i>(please select all that apply)</i>	Your agency's plans which tapped on this source	Types of information gathered from this source	Methods used* to gather information from this source
<input type="checkbox"/> Consumers	<input type="checkbox"/> Short term plans	<i>(e.g., sectors which consumers had encountered anti-competitive conduct)</i>	<i>(e.g., surveys)</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-term plans		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Long term plans		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Businesses	<input type="checkbox"/> Short term plans	<i>(e.g., emerging trends, areas which businesses require help for competition law compliance)</i>	<i>(e.g., surveys, meetings with trade / business associations)</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-term plans		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Long term plans		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify)		

Information Source <i>(please select all that apply)</i>	Your agency's plans which tapped on this source	Types of information gathered from this source	Methods used* to gather information from this source
<input type="checkbox"/> Competition Practitioners (e.g., Lawyers, Legal / Economics Consultants, Academics)	<input type="checkbox"/> Short term plans	<i>(e.g., emerging trends, perceptions of the agency's work / effectiveness)</i>	<i>(e.g., surveys, meetings with the bar association)</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-term plans		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Long term plans		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Government Agencies / Sectoral Regulators	<input type="checkbox"/> Short term plans	<i>(e.g., emerging trends, areas for collaboration)</i>	<i>(e.g., survey, meetings with the telecommunications regulator)</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-term plans		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Long term plans		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify)		
<input type="checkbox"/> National Development / Economic Plans	<input type="checkbox"/> Short term plans	<i>(e.g., priority sectors in the national plans)</i>	<i>(e.g., obtained documents on the national plans from Ministry of Economic Development)</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-term plans		

Information Source <i>(please select all that apply)</i>	Your agency's plans which tapped on this source	Types of information gathered from this source	Methods used* to gather information from this source
	<input type="checkbox"/> Long term plans		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Overseas Competition Agencies in Other Jurisdictions	<input type="checkbox"/> Short term plans	<i>(e.g., emerging trends / sectors which the agencies will look into in the coming year)</i>	<i>(e.g., survey, meetings, online documents of the agencies' plans)</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-term plans		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Long term plans		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other External Information Sources <i>(please specify)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Short term plans		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-term plans		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Long term plans		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify)		

* In your submission, please attach any questions / surveys used to gather information, and indicate the relevant information source

7. Please describe the practical issues and main challenges your agency faced when gathering information from the **external** information sources (where possible, please indicate the relevant external information sources which the practical issues and main challenges apply to).

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8. Please share some useful tips which may be helpful to other agencies when gathering information from **external** information sources (where possible, please indicate the relevant external information sources which the useful tips apply to).

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Internal Information Sources

9. Please select the key **internal** information sources which your agency taps on to develop its plans; and specify the types of information gathered.

Information Source <i>(please select all that apply)</i>	Your agency's plans which tapped on this source	Types of information gathered from this source
<input type="checkbox"/> Your Agency's Management and / or Staff **	<input type="checkbox"/> Short term plans	<i>(e.g., views on areas your agency should focus)</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-term plans	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Long term plans	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify)	

Information Source <i>(please select all that apply)</i>	Your agency's plans which tapped on this source	Types of information gathered from this source
<input type="checkbox"/> Your Agency's Data Analytics and / or Data on Complaints and Cases	<input type="checkbox"/> Short term plans	<i>(e.g., sectors with high prevalence of anti-competitive conduct)</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-term plans	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Long term plans	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Intelligence / Environment or Horizon Scanning / Research / SWOT Analysis	<input type="checkbox"/> Short term plans	<i>(e.g., emerging trends, areas with potential anti-competitive conduct)</i>
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-term plans	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Long term plans	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other Internal Information Sources** (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> Short term plans	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mid-term plans	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Long term plans	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Others (please specify)	

** In your submission, please attach any questions / surveys used to gather information and indicate the relevant information source

10. Please describe the practical issues and main challenges your agency faced when gathering information from **internal** information sources (where possible, please indicate the relevant internal information sources which the practical issues and main challenges apply to).

11. Please share some useful tips which may be helpful to other agencies when gathering information from **internal** information sources (where possible, please indicate the relevant internal information sources which the useful tips apply to).

ASSESSING THE INFORMATION GATHERED

12. Please indicate the key factors / criteria considered by your agency to prioritise the information gathered for developing its plans (please select all that apply).

- Information related to priority areas in the National Development / Economic Plans
- Information related to priority areas of the other government agencies / regulators / your agency's parent Ministry
- Information related to emerging trends
- Information related to key sectors of the economy (e.g., size of the sector in the country)
- Frequency which the information is brought up by the various information sources
- Information related to areas which have significant impact on markets, businesses and/or consumers
- Ability of your agency to act on the information (e.g., your agency's mandate, available resources and/or capability)
- Public policy / interest considerations
- Others (please specify)

13. Please describe the practical issues and main challenges your agency faced when assessing the information gathered.

14. Please share some useful tips which may be helpful to other agencies for assessing the information gathered.

SHARING OF ENFORCEMENT PRIORITIES AND EMERGING ISSUES BETWEEN ICN MEMBER AGENCIES

Usefulness of other competition agencies' enforcement priorities and emerging issues considered for your agency's planning

15. Please indicate whether the provisional / draft versions of ICN Member Agencies' enforcement priorities and emerging issues which they are considering for their work in the following year(s) would be a useful information source for your agency's planning.

- Very Useful
- Somewhat Useful
- Somewhat Not Useful
- Not Useful At All
- Others (please specify)

16. Please indicate the **latest** period when the sharing of the provisional / draft versions of other ICN member agencies' enforcement priorities and emerging issues for the following year would be most useful for your agency's planning.

- 1st Quarter of the year (Jan-Mar)
- 2nd Quarter of the year (Apr-Jun)
- 3rd Quarter of the year (Jul-Sep)
- 4th Quarter of the year (Oct-Dec)
- Anytime
- Others (please specify)

Ability to share your agency's provisional / draft version of the enforcement priorities and emerging issues considered

17. Please indicate whether your agency is able and/or willing to share with other ICN Member Agencies its provisional / draft version of the enforcement priorities and emerging issues which it is considering for its work in the following year.

- Yes, the entire document can be shared
- Yes, but only information which are non-confidential can be shared
- Yes, but only if the information is anonymised and/or consolidated with the information from other ICN Member Agencies
- Yes, but only if the sharing is conducted verbally
- No (please specify the reasons and suggestions on how to make it more conducive / favourable for your agency to share its provisional / draft version of its enforcement priorities and emerging issues which it is considering for its work in the following year)

18. Please indicate the **earliest** period when your agency is able to share with other ICN Member Agencies its provisional / draft version of the enforcement priorities and emerging issues which it is considering for its work in the following year.

- 1st Quarter of the year (Jan-Mar)
- 2nd Quarter of the year (Apr-Jun)
- 3rd Quarter of the year (Jul-Sep)
- 4th Quarter of the year (Oct-Dec)
- Anytime
- Not able/willing to share it
- Others (please specify)

Format / method to share enforcement priorities and emerging issues between ICN Member Agencies

19. Please indicate the most conducive / favourable format / method for your agency to participate in the sharing of the provisional / draft versions of ICN Member Agencies' enforcement priorities and emerging issues which they are considering for their work in the following year.

- Survey ICN Member Agencies and produce a report on the consolidated responses
- Survey ICN Member Agencies and share the consolidated responses in a webinar / ICN Annual Conference session
- Sharing by ICN Member Agencies in a webinar / ICN Annual Conference session
- Others (please specify)

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