



**General Quality
Management Policy**
of the Institut de la statistique du Québec



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Table of contents

1.	<i>Objective</i>	5
2.	<i>Definitions</i>	5
	<i>2.1 Concept of quality</i>	5
	<i>2.2 Dimensions of quality</i>	5
3.	<i>General orientation</i>	7
4.	<i>Normative framework</i>	7
	<i>4.1 Inputs – user needs</i>	8
	<i>4.2 Production</i>	9
	<i>4.2.1 Resources</i>	9
	<i>4.2.2 Processes</i>	10
	<i>4.3 Outputs – products and services</i>	11
5.	<i>References</i>	13
	<i>Appendix</i>	14

1. Objective

The goal of the General Quality Management Policy of the Institut de la statistique du Québec is to systematize, harmonize and improve the means now in place at the Institut to ensure the quality of its products and services for the benefit of users.

The policy first defines the concept of quality determined by the Institut. It sets forth the general orientation of the Institut as regards quality and clarifies the content of the normative framework intended to ensure the quality of the Institut's products and services.

2. Definitions

2.1 Concept of quality

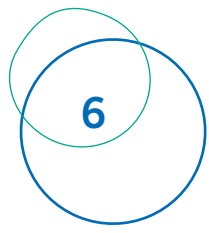
The quality of a product or service is embodied in all the characteristics that influence its capacity to meet a given need. This multi-dimensional approach to quality presupposes consideration of all the criteria that tailor statistical information to the needs of users.

2.2 Dimensions of quality

To ensure that statistical information adequately meets the needs of its users, the Institut has defined the following six dimensions as criteria of quality: relevance, reliability and objectivity, comparability, timeliness, intelligibility, and accessibility. Before production, they constitute the targets to be met in order to ensure quality. After production, they represent the criteria on the basis of which the quality of the information is evaluated.

2.2.1 The **relevance** of statistical information refers to the degree to which it meets the needs meant to be satisfied. Ensuring the relevance of statistical information means that products and services meet the needs of users as comprehensively as possible. The objective is to enable users to have, on a routine basis and according to changes in their concerns, both an overview and a sufficiently detailed description of the situation and trends in the society and economy of Québec.

2.2.2 The **reliability** and **objectivity** of statistical information refer to the degree to which it is consistent with the reality it is to describe. To ensure the reliability and objectivity of statistical information, users must be reassured that the information is as accurate as possible. This means that it was produced, on the one hand, so as to minimize the typical errors that normally affect data and, on the other, so as to maximize scientific rigour in the interpretations, analyses and summaries produced on the basis of the data. The objective is to ensure that the work measures reality as precisely as possible.

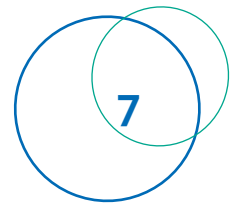


2.2.3 The **comparability** of statistical information refers to the possibility of it being compared or combined with other similar information (over time and over space, between fields, and between data sources). Ensuring the comparability of statistical information means seeing it is based as much as possible on concepts, classifications, population units, measurement tools and integration frameworks consistent with international standards in the field in question, while leaving room for justified particularities or innovations. The objective is, in the first place, to make it possible, for the benefit of users, to establish the coherence of the statistical information with other sources in the same field or between related fields. It is, in the second place, to allow comparisons over time and space, in order to highlight development trends and changes that arise, or compare the situation observed at various geographic levels or between various governments, from regional, national and international standpoints.

2.2.4 The **timeliness** of statistical information refers to its availability at the appropriate and anticipated time. Ensuring the timeliness of statistical information means seeing that the information is produced and disseminated within the shortest possible time frame or with the appropriate frequency so as to minimize the time lag with the period or moment of observation. It also means ensuring that the time when it becomes available is in keeping with the announced or agreed upon deadline.

2.2.5 The **intelligibility** of statistical information refers to the ease with which it is understood by users. Ensuring the intelligibility of statistical information means providing users, in as clear a manner but also in as adapted a manner as possible, with the explanations required for the adequate interpretation and use of the statistical information. The explanations must be presented succinctly in layman's terms or in a more specialized and elaborate manner, according to the types of users and their needs.

2.2.6 The **accessibility** of statistical information corresponds to the ease with which users can obtain it. Ensuring the accessibility of statistical information implies that the conditions under which it is obtained by users are as simple and as user-friendly as possible. It is a matter of presenting the statistical information available to users in a diversified manner, i.e. in various formats and through various access modes. Users choose according to their needs, the anticipated use and the technical means they have available.



3. *General orientation*

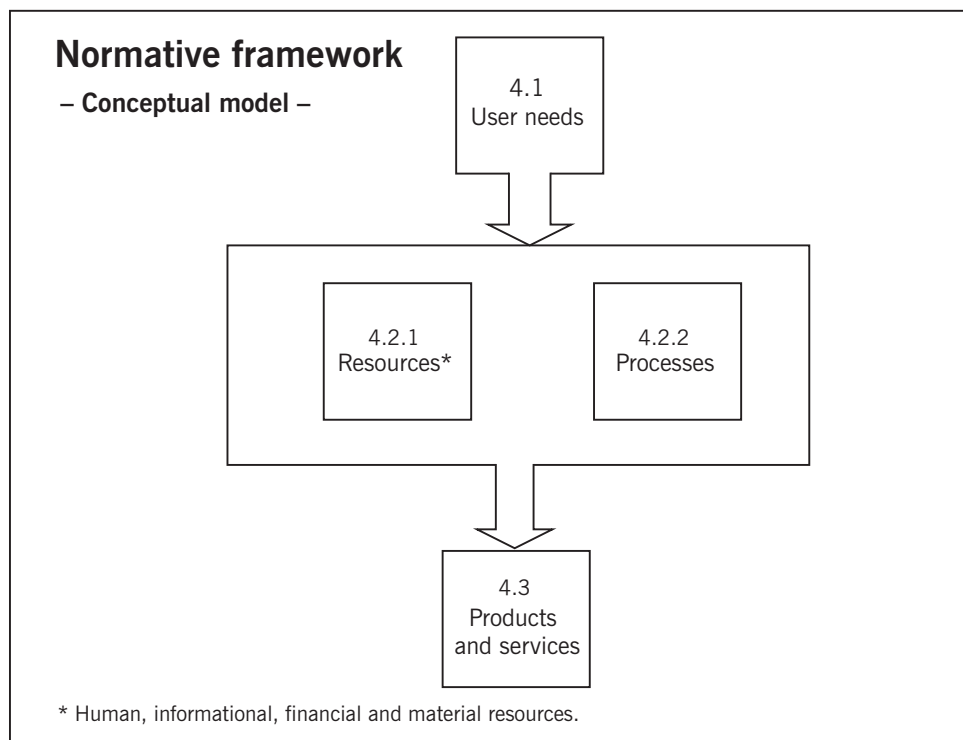
The goal of the Institut is to achieve, for a given level of resources, the best compromise between the dimensions of quality, with a view to meeting user needs in the best way possible. The level of quality sought for each dimension cannot be absolute, since it must take two realities into consideration—the constraint of the interdependence of some dimensions of quality and the Institut’s scarce resources—and adjust to them.

Quality is a requirement at all levels of the organization: all employees, at every level of the hierarchy, must make a commitment to it, as each must play his or her role and assume his or her responsibilities.

4. *Normative framework*

The Institut’s normative framework for quality management is made up of the policy statements, procedural code, practices and mechanisms it has put in place with a view to managing the quality of its products and services. These are grouped according to three stages in the Institut’s statistical information production system (see below the normative framework conceptual model). First are the inputs into the production system, i.e. user needs. They then determine production, which constitutes the second stage in the system. That stage is itself composed of two elements: human, informational, financial and material resources, and production processes—elements that together produce statistical information. The third stage corresponds to the output of the production system, namely, the Institut’s products and services.

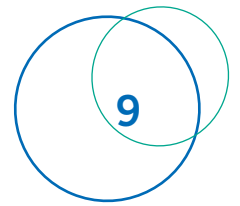
The presentation of the normative framework contains references to documents listed in the appendix [see numbers in square brackets]. The normative framework for quality is implemented through the application of each policy statement, procedural code and practice, and each mechanism. When the documents are policy statements, they clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various parties.



4.1 Inputs – user needs

The Institut has a number of mechanisms to establish an ongoing dialogue with its clientele and involve it in the development of its statistical programs, and the definition of its products and their evaluation, as well as to ensure that its clientele becomes aware of its commitment to quality:

- The Institut has set up and leads several advisory committees in its various fields of intervention with a view to enabling its principal clients and partners to express their needs and concerns, and take part in the development of its main orientations [1].
- The Institut has an accounting mechanism whereby it can gather own-source revenue. Thus, it responds to particular requests by producing customized statistical information.
- The Institut has a multi-year strategic plan [2] and monitors it by means of performance indicators. The annual management report [3] reiterates the commitments described in the strategic plan and accounts for the achievement of objectives, particularly in terms of meeting the needs of the clientele.
- It also conducts an annual planning exercise for its activities according to its available resources and the priorities it establishes, and makes public, at the beginning of each fiscal year, the dissemination calendar for statistical information on various aspects of Québec society [4].



- It produces and distributes the *Declaration of Services to the Public*, in which it acknowledges the importance of each person and makes clear commitments in terms of its ways of doing things and know-how, the protection of confidential information and the respondents to its surveys [5].
- In all sectors of its activities, the Institut sets up and participates in various consultation mechanisms (for example, steering committees, task forces and follow-up committees).

4.1 Production

4.2.1 Resources

The Institut makes use of various measures to promote an organizational culture and context conducive to quality.

From the standpoint of the culture of the organization:

- The Institut has management values [6] that all refer to the quality of services and the satisfaction of the clientele, its search for performance and the importance of well-trained and competent human resources. More particularly, training activities [7] aimed at improving quality are regularly made available to employees.
- To be able to rely on a staff that is motivated and mobilized to respond to quality-related issues, and to attract and retain competent personnel, it is essential that the Institut be able to respond to the needs of its employees and know their perceptions. It is in this spirit that the Institut has institutionalized the conducting of a survey every three years on the organizational climate.
- The Institut is also concerned by work force planning. It has acquired a variety of means to maintain an optimal level of expertise, to provide for new employees, to have accurate knowledge of human resource needs so as to have sufficient staff at all times, and to adjust staff movements in order to promote diversity of experience and culture.
- Furthermore, numerous programs and policy statements are aimed at the well-being of employees at work, as the Institut realizes that this determines mobilization, motivation and the provision of quality services [8] [9] [10].
- Routine, rapid and complete communication of information of an institutional or other nature to employees is facilitated by various mechanisms, such as the Intranet, the content of which is updated regularly.

- The Institut maintains a culture conducive to productive relations with its respondents and data suppliers, since the quality of the data it produces is directly linked to their collaboration. In that regard, the Institut is committed to lighten the burden of respondents; it assures them that the data gathered will be kept confidential, and it concerns itself with all the ethical aspects of surveys. A special section on its Website, entitled “Information for Institut de la statistique Survey Respondents”, is intended especially to reassure respondents that the information they provide the Institut is confidential and to give them information about the surveys to which they respond [11] [12] [13] [14].

From the standpoint of the organizational context:

- As for its project management philosophy, the Institut functions according to the matrix management of its activities in order to capitalize to the extent possible on the benefits derived from the competence and motivation of its human resources, given the relatively modest size of the organization and the type of projects it carries out. The Institut’s organizational structure reflects the centralization of expertise: administrative units are responsible for statistical programs, while other units are in charge of specialized services (methodology, collection, information technologies, publishing and communications) [15] [3].
- Hence, teamwork has a dominant place at the Institut and project managers play a key role in it [16].
- The Institut’s employees, particularly project managers, are supported by a project office whose role is to document, integrate and systematize the project management process, and to dispense information. To that end, management tools for the various stages and dimensions of project management have been developed [17] [18] [19] [20] [21] [22].
- A program to welcome and integrate new employees provides them with the most comprehensive information possible about the Institut and how it operates [23].
- From the standpoint of information technologies, the Institut makes available to its staff tools, means and a work environment tailored to the varying needs of its projects. Specialists in that field play an advisory role and ensure that each employee benefits from technologies easily and with complete security, always with the goal in mind of improving the efficiency, accessibility, quality and simplicity of its services [24] [25].

4.2.2 Processes

The Institut has a number of mechanisms instrumental in ensuring the quality of its processes, a *sine qua non* of the quality of its products and services.

- A compendium of good practices in the Institut's surveys makes it possible to harmonize ways of doing things in the design and implementation phases [26].
- A quality self-assessment form in surveys is used particularly for design, implementation and evaluation [27].
- The survey quality policy is aimed at explaining the use of the compendium of good practices in Institut surveys, and of the self-assessment form [28].
- Results and productivity indicators for collection activities make it possible to monitor their performance for each project [29].
- The Institut has a recurrent and cyclical process review practice under which its projects and processes are thoroughly reviewed and recommendations are made to improve their quality. A program evaluation function, particularly to assess the relevance of products and services, is also in place [30].
- With a view to supporting and improving its processes, the Institut ensures optimal use of information technologies and sees that staff understand both their possibilities and limitations [31] [32].
- Frequent post mortems also help to improve processes and content.

4.3 Outputs – products and services

To guarantee that the outputs of the Institut's production system meet the needs of users, products and services must be reliable, accessible and able to be used properly. Moreover, the Institut must be in a position to evaluate the products and services, and reproduce them if needed. The Institut has a number of policy statements and mechanisms in that regard:

- The internal documentation policy [33] ensures that complete and detailed documentation supports all the Institut's products and services. This makes it possible, among other things, to ensure the durability of the project record and to facilitate the work of new employees.
- The statistical information and metadata dissemination policy [34] defines the standards for the dissemination of statistical information, in order to provide the user with an adequate understanding for the user's statistical information evaluation and analysis work.
- The communication policy [35] defines the processes for communication with users and within the Institut, with a view to ensuring the relevance, reliability, neutrality and accessibility of its products and services.

- The dissemination calendar for statistical information on various aspects of Québec society [4], distributed at the beginning of each fiscal year, enables users to know in advance the dates of publication of the year's statistical information.
- The Institut has acquired a normative framework, a highly secure dissemination environment and practices to facilitate access by third parties to its statistical products. In particular, it places at the disposal of its clientele various access mechanisms: its Website, which contains all the statistical information it produces and its publications, may be consulted free of charge; the Centre d'information et de documentation (the information and documentation centre), which provides information on request; and the Centre d'accès aux données de recherche (the research data access centre) for microdata files [11] [36] [37].
- The Institut has monthly indicators of the response time for inquiries at the Centre d'information et de documentation, in order to monitor the commitments set forth in that regard in the *Declaration of Services to the Public*. Furthermore, the Institut periodically conducts a survey on the clientele's satisfaction with the Centre.

5. References

- **Other reference document of the Institut**

Integrated Quality Management Framework of the Institut de la statistique du Québec.
General Orientation Document

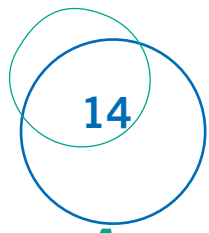
- **Other publications**

BRACKSTONE, Gordon (1999). "Managing Data Quality in a Statistical Agency", Statistics Canada, Survey Methodology, Vol. 25, No. 2, December (12-001-XPB).

TREWIN, Dennis. "The Importance of a Quality Culture", Proceedings of Statistics Canada Symposium 2001 entitled *Achieving Data Quality in a Statistical Agency: A Methodological Perspective*.

STATISTICS FINLAND (2002). "Quality Guidelines for Official Statistics", on-line at www.stat.fi/qualityguidelines.

STATISTICS CANADA. "Statistics Canada's Quality Assurance Framework" (12-586-XIA).



Appendix

Normative framework for quality management

Documentary references

Institut Intranet

- [1] Mandates, composition and reporting of advisory committees
- [2] Multi-year strategic plan*
- [3] Annual management report*
- [6] Management values*
- [7] Human resource development
- [8] Employee assistance program
- [9] Workplace health policy
- [10] Policy to fight harassment
- [11] Set of policies, procedures and guidelines for the protection of confidential information and for security
- [15] Organizational chart*
- [17] Project management workshops
- [18] Work sheet (project cost estimate)
- [19] Project charter
- [20] Budgetary adjustment form
- [21] Change request
- [22] Project organization manual
- [23] Program to welcome and integrate new employees
- [24] Compendium of technology tips and tricks
- [25] Set of guidelines and procedures in the “Technologies” section
- [35] Communication policy

Institut Website

- [4] Dissemination calendar for statistical information on various aspects of Québec society
- [5] *Declaration of Services to the Public*
- [14] Information for Institut de la statistique Survey Respondents
- [36] Centre d'information et de documentation (information and documentation centre)
- [37] Centre d'accès aux données de recherche of the Institut de la statistique du Québec (research data access centre)

Other documents

- [29] Results evaluation sheet and collection management assessment chart

Policy statements and future documents

- [12] Policy on information to be given to survey respondents – section 11 of the Act
- [13] Mandate and composition of the Institut's ethics committee
- [16] Roles and responsibilities of members of the project team ... to understand one another clearly
- [26] Compendium of good practices in surveys
- [27] Survey quality self-assessment form
- [28] Survey quality policy
- [30] Program evaluation and process review policy
- [31] Overview of technologies, orientations and procedures
- [32] List of reusable technological components
- [33] Internal documentation policy
- [34] Statistical information and metadata dissemination policy

* Also on the Institut Website.

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