

UNSDG Efficiency Roadmap 2025-2028

1. Executive Summary

To advance the Secretary-General's reform objectives outlined in his report A/72/684, the 2022- 2024 Efficiency Roadmap was developed to guide the work of the UN Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) Business Innovation Group (BIG) in ensuring efficient and effective operations towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 2022-2024 Roadmap achieved tangible results on many fronts. As reported in the 2024 Report of the Secretary General on the Implementation of General Assembly Resolution 75/233 on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System, efficiency gains of \$553.6 million were achieved in 2023, corresponding to a 37 per cent increase from 2022 (\$405 million). In 2023, a third of these efficiency gains (\$185.3 million) came from four efficiency streams: Business Operations Strategy (BOS), Common Premises (CP), Common Back Office (CBO), Global Shared Services (GSS).

First, **Business Operations Strategies (BOS)**, a results-based framework of collaborative joint service arrangements, is now applied in all UN Country Teams. In 2023, a 49% increase in efficiencies amounting to \$125.4 million was noted compared to 2022. The ownership of BOS by the UN Country Teams and their interagency Operations Management Teams (OMTs) was streamlined. As a result, in 2024, the UNSDG decided to start a progressive transition of the BOS implementation and monitoring functions from UNDCO to the entities themselves. In the 2025-2028 Roadmap, this transition of ownership of BOS to the entities will progress and further deepen their interagency cooperation at the country level, supported by DCO in areas such as policy, data analytics, capacity development, advocacy and knowledge management. This transition to entities, coupled with the concomitant CBO process, will gradually decrease the activities and the efficiency gains associated with BOS, as shown in Table 1 below where BOS efficiency gains are estimated to be \$105M annually going forward.

Second, **Common Premises (CP)** stayed its course with construction/renovation projects initiated in 58 of the pre-identified 66 high-cost locations, 17 of which were completed. This steady pace resulted in \$2.5 million of efficiency gains in 2023. Currently, 32 percent of all UN buildings are Common Premises, hosting 56 percent of all UN personnel globally. Recognizing that Common Premises remain a critical enabler for all other common services at the country level, the new Roadmap intends to complete 22 more CP projects.

Thirdly, the establishment of **Common Back Offices (CBO)** lagged. Despite the initially planned scope of 50 countries in the 2022 – 2024 Roadmap, only four CBOs were launched

by December 2024 - in Kenya, Brazil, Vietnam and Tanzania, covering administration, procurement, human resources, ICT, finance and logistics as services. Among the lessons learned are the importance of contextualization, change management and stakeholder engagement for successful CBO launching. These critical lessons have informed the revised target of 20 CBOs in the new Roadmap, which favors a qualitative understanding of the distinct pathways to launching and context-specific workings of governance mechanisms, including post-launch client centricity of service providers, the importance of the full use of the CBO services by client entities, and the gradual adaptation of staffing arrangements and cost structures.

Fourthly, **Global Shared Services (GSS)** are a significant driver for entity-specific and bilateral efficiency gains and resulted in total efficiency gains of \$57.4 million in 2023 (about \$1 million bilateral and \$56.4 million for entity-specific), emanating from 42 global service ideas from 7 providers. GSS services will be prioritized in the new cycle (Annex I) with at least 10 new services prioritized for scaling up and 130 new global agreements signed. In this new cycle of 2025-2028, GSS aims to generate efficiency gains through leveraging digital innovation, strategic service consolidation, mutual recognition, and increased transparency, with focus on enhanced scrutiny by BIG on service sign-up, utilization and reporting by service providing and receiving entities. Two of the already mature service offerings will be targeted for consolidation, **e.g.**, payroll and human resources (Table I).

Finally, this new roadmap 2025 - 2028 will prioritize the operationalization of Mutual Recognition, by incorporating the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit's (JIU) review of the implementation of the principle of mutual recognition within the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2024/4), including through leveraging the strategic engagement with the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM).

2. Status, lessons learned and way forward

This roadmap proposes the following potential targets for the period 2025-2028.

Table 1: Overview of 2022-2024 Roadmap, reported results and proposed targets for 2025-2028

Initiative	2024 Roadmap targets	2023 Reported	2028 Roadmap targets
Business Operations Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 132 strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 132 strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 132 strategies reviewed annually 3,000 active BOS services reported annually 15 High Impact Common Services (HICS) documented and scaled 45% of countries use more than 50% of HICS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 105M annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 125.4M annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 105M annually (as transitioning to CBO progresses)
Common Premises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 66 CP projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 58 CP projects initiated 17 CPs completed 41 projects ongoing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22 CP projects completed 35% of premises are CPs 59% of personnel in CPs Establishment of minimum accessibility standards for all UN buildings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.7M annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.5M annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6M annually
Common Back Offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50 CBOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 CBOs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20 CBOs 75% of entities signed up to CBOs 75% signed up for entities using services (%) Guidance for service packages available for self-starter countries
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 76.8M annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0M annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18M annually
Global Shared Services (priority services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 42 services 126M annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 services 57.4M annually (included in the reported entity-specific and bilateral initiatives) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 10 services prioritized for scaling to entities 130 global agreements signed 75% of global agreements in use 14 entities reporting GSS efficiency gains 2 mature services consolidated (e.g., payroll and human resources)
Entity specific services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not specified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 391.3M annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 391M annually
Bilateral initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not specified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 34.4M annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 34M annually
Enablers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mutual recognition – addressing challenges 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All entities to complete Mutual Recognition operationalization steps.
TOTAL USD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 315.5M annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 553.6M annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 554M annually

This Efficiency Roadmap 2025-2028 outlines the evidence-based learning from work conducted in the preceding cycle of 2022-2024 and proposes a new Roadmap for the next four years. The following sections delve into the lessons learned and propose the next steps under the above-mentioned four efficiency streams.

2.1. Global Shared Services (GSS)

With the commitment of UNSDG Principals and the engagement of the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM), the 2022 - 2024 Roadmap successfully established a Global Shared Services (GSS) framework. 10 business cases were created. However, adoption and usage across entities still need to be expanded. The new Roadmap aims to:

- scale up the 10 priority GSS services and develop business cases for 11 additional services (Annex II),
- create formal corporate global agreements between service providing and recipient entities,
- establish tracking and reporting systems for sign-ups and service utilization rates,
- consolidate large-scale services, such as payroll, human resource benefits, and entitlements, within one or two service centers, towards establishing a network of shared service centers,
- leverage artificial intelligence across current and future services with clear business cases and good buy-in prospects from UNSDG entities,
- link operational inclusion metrics with those in the Secretary General's Strategy on Disability Inclusion, Gender Parity, and the UN Youth Strategy, among others.

a. BOS

With 132 BOS strategies in place and over 3,000 active opportunities for common services on the UNINFO platform, this new cycle will empower entities to take the lead on annual reviews, implementation, monitoring and reporting. High-Impact Common Services (Annex III), defined as those common services with the highest cost efficiencies, will be further scaled to harness the full potential of cross-stream efficiencies, including building synergies between CP, CBO and GSS services. Projected annual efficiencies are expected to be at approximately \$105 million as transitioning to CBO progresses.

Multilingualism, a priority of the Secretary General, will also be strongly upheld in this new cycle, with BOS guidance notes translated into official United Nations languages. Inclusion and programmatic linkages to accelerating the Sustainable Development Goals will be central, ensuring that common services incorporate social and environmental impact considerations in addition to highest cost efficiency. This includes initiatives such as renewable energy, disability inclusion, youth empowerment and gender parity. This mandate-driven approach aims to enhance efficiency and drive meaningful impact in alignment with the values and mission of the United Nations.

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2.2 Shared services at the local level

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b. Common Back Offices

The 2022–2024 Efficiency Roadmap aimed to launch 50 CBOs in the largest non-crisis countries, with a projected efficiency gain of \$76.8 million by 2024. However, the need to contextualize the methodology, the decentralized rollout methodology, lengthy stakeholder engagement processes, and exogenous factors such as political instability and social unrest in some countries, progress was slow, with only four CBOs launched in the concluding cycle, all in 2024 - Kenya, Vietnam, Tanzania and Brazil.

Building on lessons learned from the initial phase, the new Roadmap commits to implementing 20 CBOs with anticipated efficiency gains in the range of \$18 million by 2028. These 20 include Bangladesh, Colombia, Indonesia, Jordan, Pakistan, Philippines, Senegal, Thailand and Zimbabwe, where work has already started.

As implementation progresses and operational services shift to CBOs, entities will need to work on adjusting their internal staffing and cost structures. Other factors such as online client centricity training will also be addressed. The BIG will refine mechanisms for managing service participation by entities, including vertical integration with GSS for relevant service lines. Simplification of CBO planning and design work will continue by integrating data collection and reporting on the DCO-managed UNINFO data platform. The BIG will also develop a methodology for additional “self-starter” CBOs, which will be made available to all countries.

c. Common Premises

Funding constraints have been a key factor impeding progress on Common Premises. Other lessons learned include the time-intensive design of construction and renovation projects, distinct administrative and legal policies across the UN system, and the long-term commitment required from the entities, particularly regarding facilities management costs. This is especially relevant given the time it takes for efficiency gains to accrue after establishing a Common Premise.

In this new cycle, the focus will be on rent-free new construction and renovation projects provided by Host Governments, particularly in large duty stations where higher returns on investment are expected. Likewise, CP projects involving UN-funded construction of new premises in select locations will be at the center, where the Government has provided land to the UN (Malawi, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and Uganda).

Other pathways to Common Premises, such as joint building rentals by multiple entities and efficient space utilization through flexible workspace arrangements within existing

buildings, will also be employed. Meanwhile, the BIG will explore and review innovative financing mechanisms, including private sector engagement where applicable. The non-financial aspects of Common Premises under scrutiny will include the requirements of early integration of security parameters, proximity to UN meeting locations, and stronger enforcement of accessibility and environmental sustainability measures to align effectively with the SDGs.

3. Three Enablers –Mutual Recognition, Costing and Pricing Principles, Client Satisfaction

Even though 98 percent of UNSDG members have formally signed on to Mutual Recognition, its implementation has been weak, hindered by factors including a loose definition of Mutual Recognition and lack of operational guidance, unclear governance and accountability enforcement mechanisms, a lack of an effective system-wide coordination mechanism and, and communication gaps between entity headquarters and country level teams. To address these challenges, the BIG will advocate the adoption of the seven essential success factors that are critical for effective implementation (mutual trust, obligation, responsibility, support, respect, tolerance, and satisfaction), across all entities. A legal working group will be formed which is aligned with Recommendation 3 of the of the JIU report JIU/REP/2024/4, which puts emphasis on the enabling role of legal offices.

With 78 percent of entities having signed both the Costing and Pricing and Client Satisfaction, the BIG, with the support of the Development Coordination Office, will focus on getting more entities on board. The Costing and Pricing enabler will allow increased transparency in the exchange of services between different UN entities, by clearly defining how costs are calculated, and prices are set, thereby facilitating a fluid and equitable system of service delivery. The Client and Satisfaction enabler will hold service providers accountable for meeting client needs through open and frequent feedback mechanisms with a focus on continuous quality improvement.

Governance including Monitoring and Reporting

The new cycle will focus on consistent senior-level engagement across the entities and ensuring more systematic linkages with the High-Level Committee on Management (HLCM).

The Efficiency Dashboard, a one-stop-shop for data collection and reporting function on efficiencies will be integrated within, and updated continuously, on [UNINFO](#), to realize this Roadmap. The transparent data reporting and monitoring online will also mitigate risks of falling short of implementing the Roadmap.

A formal mid-point review will take place in 2026. In addition, constant monitoring will aim to have the necessary measures contemplated ahead of time if any of the initiatives fall off track. Systematic monitoring by the Task Teams, Reference Group of the BIG supported by DCO will contribute to the mitigation of risks.

5. Summary UNSDG Efficiency Roadmap 2025-2028

Initiative	Indicators	Targets			
		2025	2026	2027	2028
Business Operations Strategies	1. # of strategies in place and review annually	132	132	132	132
	2. # of active BOS services	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
	3. # of HICS documented and scaled	5	10	15	15
	4. Share of countries use > 50% of HICS (%)	30	35	40	45
		105M	105M	105M	105M
Common Premises	1. # of CP projects	33	30	27	24
	2. Share of premises are CPs (%)	31.5	32	32.5	33
	3. Share of personnel in CPs (%)	54.5	55	55.5	56
	4. Establishment of minimum accessibility standards for UN buildings	X			
		3M	4M	5M	6M
Common Back Offices	1. # of CBOs	8	12	16	20
	2. Share of entities signed up to CBOs (%)	75	75	75	75
	3. Share of signed up entities using services (%)	75	75	75	75
	4. Guidance for service packages available for self-starter countries	X	X	X	X
		0M	4M	12M	18M¹
Global Shared Services⁹ (prioritized services)	1. # of priority services offered	10	10	10	10
	2. # of global entity agreements signed	100	110	120	130
	3. Share of global entity agreements in use (%)	60	65	70	75
	4. # of entities reporting GSS efficiency gains	8	10	12	14
	5. Consolidation of mature global services (e.g. payroll) into one or two service centers to serve all entities		X	X	X
Entity specific initiatives	Initiatives managed and tracked by entities	391M	391M	391M	391M
Other bilateral initiatives	Initiatives managed and tracked by entities	34M	34M	34M	34M
TOTAL USD		533M	538M	547M	554M

¹ By 2030, when 20 CBOs are fully operational, the target efficiency is estimated to be around 27 million.

ANNEX I

Global Service	Service Provider	# of CEB entities signed	# of UNSDG entities signed locally	# of UNSDG entities signed globally	# of UNSDG entities utilized the service in 2023
UN FLEET	WFP/ UNHCR	18	18	14	10
UN Booking Hub (UN Mobility)	WFP	19	16	10	16
UN Booking Hub (UN Accommodation)	WFP	7	7	6	7
UN Booking Hub (UN Medical & Wellness)	WFP	2	2	1	2
UN Webbuy+	UNOPS	19	17	4	10
HR Benefits & Entitlements	UNDP	27	16	3	26
Payroll Services	UNDP	27	16	3	26
Payment Services	UNDP	70	15	0	15
UN Digital ID	UN ICC	6	6	4	6
UN Digital Hub for Treasury Solution	UNHCR/ UNDP	4	3	3	3

ANNEX II

11 new Global Services as of December 2024	
Global Service	Service Provider
UN Road Safety Academy	WFP
Digital Disposal and Auction Services	WFP
Global Disposal Services	UNHCR
HR Services for Non-Staff Contracts	UNOPS
UN Hotel Programme	WFP
UN Booking Hub – UN Facilities	WFP
ERP Services (Quantum)	UNDP
HR Services (Partner Personnel Service Agreement)	UNDP
GSSC Payroll Services	UNICEF
GSSC Payment Services	UNICEF
GSSC Learning Services	UNICEF

High Impact Common Services

HICS IDENTIFIED FOR SCALING UP

Common Service	Realized Figures 2023	# of UNCTs in usage
Management of common premises	\$ 21,648,518.00	36
Accommodation services (outsourced)	\$ 19,216,957.00	26
Travel services	\$ 15,695,665.00	89
Conference and event management	\$ 7,428,343.00	56
Security Services (outsourced)	\$ 6,335,576.00	71
Internet connectivity and VSAT services	\$ 5,867,055.00	71
Fuel management	\$ 5,286,580.00	34
Vehicle rental	\$ 3,018,360.00	34
Printing services	\$ 2,917,202.00	49
Banking services and bank charges	\$ 2,758,674.00	30
Mobile phone services including scratch cards	\$ 2,586,413.00	49
Cleaning Services	\$ 1,986,900.00	80
Vehicle maintenance	\$ 1,904,257.00	32
Micro-Assessment	\$ 1,022,763.00	48
Interpretation and translation services	\$ 710,432.00	22