

A Road Map for Preparing a Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics in Georgia

Abbreviations and Acronyms

ENPARD	European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development
ESS	European Statistical System
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEOSTAT	National Statistics Office of Georgia
GSS	Georgian Statistical System
MENRP	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
PARIS21	Partnership for Statistics for Development in the 21 st Century
SC	Steering Committee
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPARS	Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics
TWG	Technical Working Group
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Importance of Agriculture in Georgia

Georgia has substantial agricultural potential, but its recent history has been characterized by a significant decrease in both output and in incomes. In the ten years following the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991-2001) there was a real contraction in agricultural output of around 11 per cent per year on average¹. At its lowest point, Georgia's agricultural output was just below one third of what it had been during the Soviet era.

Since the turn of the century, however, the decline in the agricultural sector has levelled out and in recent years output has shown some growth. The real growth rate of agricultural sector(including forestry and fishing) in 2013 was 11.3% and 1.5% in 2014. It is clear, however that the sector, while having considerable potential for contributing to economic growth and income generation, still faces many challenges. The Government places great emphasis on the need for investment in increasing output and productivity and earlier this year launched its strategy for the sector up to 2020².

The Strategy identifies the potential for growth, with more than 43 per cent of the total land area designated as agricultural land and a diverse range of agro-ecological conditions. Constraints include a fragmented land distribution with just over three quarters of farms having one hectare of land or less and land registration still an outstanding issue. Recently published preliminary results from the 2014 census of agriculture indicate a reduction in the total number of holdings declined by about 13per cent from 2004³. At the same time, however, the share of agriculture in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while declining slightly since 2007, has remained more or less constant over the past four years at just under 10 per cent. The average annual real growth of total economy was 5.4 per cent in 2010-2014. In the same period, the average annual real growth of agriculture reached to 4.2 per cent.

1.2. The Need for a Strategic Plan for Agricultural and Rural Statistics

The case for a comprehensive strategic plan for agricultural and rural statistics (SPARS) in Georgia at this time is very strong. First is the need to

¹Welton (2013)

² Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia, 2015-2020, Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), (2015)

³2004 Agricultural census did not cover 5 large cities: Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Rustavi, Batumi and Poti.

provide the indicators and statistics series needed to support the implementation of the Government's Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia 2015-2020 as well as to monitor progress and evaluate its impact. The strategy itself is comprehensive, covering just about all aspects of agriculture in the country and will generate demands for new types of data and new indicators. As the Strategy is already being implemented it will be important to introduce improvements to both the coverage and the quality of agricultural statistics as soon as possible.

A second important reason is the need to take advantage of the data that were collected in the censuses of population and agriculture that were conducted jointly in 2014. Some initial preliminary results have already been published and it is anticipated that the full results will be disseminated in April 2016. Once the data have been processed and published, they will provide an important baseline as well as a sampling frame for surveys of households and holdings. In particular, the fact that the two censuses were carried out simultaneously provides the basis for developing integrated sampling frames, which can be linked together. This is a key recommendation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics and the longer the delay before the frames are developed, the more difficult it will be to maintain this link. The fact that all households and holdings identified in the census are now geo-referenced will also be important.

The third factor is the signing of the Association Agreement (AA) between the member states of the European Union and Georgia in August 2014. Articles 286-291 of the AA aim to strengthen the capacity of the national statistical system and progressively align it with the European Statistical System (ESS). Since this requirement presents substantial challenges to the national statistical system of Georgia, it seems reasonable to begin the process as soon as possible and the preparation of the SPARS is an important opportunity to do this for agricultural and rural statistics.

As well as placing obligations on the national statistical system, of course, the agreement with the EU also provides financial and technical assistance in a number of different areas. The European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development (ENPARD) is a five-year programme that runs from March 2013 to March 2018 and aims to reinvigorate the agricultural sector in Georgia with a total budget of €52 million. The programme provides both budget support as well as technical assistance and improving statistics is included as part of the package. Negotiations for the second phase of ENPARD are in progress and are expected to include some conditions specific to agricultural statistics. Coordinating the preparation of

SPARS with the ENPARD discussions will help to ensure that the specific conditions focusing on statistics can be taken into account.

The fifth supporting factor for preparing a strategy for agricultural statistics now is that GEOSTAT are already preparing a new strategy for national statistics that will cover the period from 2015 to 2018. The first national strategy for statistics was approved in 2011 and covered the period to 2014. With assistance from Statistics Lithuania, GEOSTAT is now embarked on a process to prepare a new strategic plan with a particular focus on aligning processes and outputs with the requirements of the ESS. Preparing the strategy for agricultural statistics at the same time has a number of obvious advantages and will help to ensure that both documents are coordinated and consistent with each other.

Finally, preparing a strategy now will help to ensure that the Georgian system of agricultural and rural statistics is aligned with the reporting requirements that are expected to emerge from the launch of post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015. The increase in the number of goals and targets for the SDGs compared with the Millennium Development Goals illustrates the increasing complexity of the development process, but also new global aspirations to eliminate poverty and reduce deprivation. At the same time though this increase will place a much greater burden on national statistical systems, which will continue to be the source of much of the data needed. It is important, therefore, that the strategic plan identifies the need for new data in the area of agriculture and rural development and builds it into future work plans.

1.3. The SPARS Process

It is proposed that the process of preparing the SPARS in Georgia will follow the guidelines prepared by FAO⁴, with some modifications to take into account the special situation of the country and the need to coordinate closely with other related processes. It is anticipated that the preparation of the strategic plan will involve the following phases.

- **Preparation** – this includes reaching agreement on the scope and timeframe for the strategy, identifying the tasks to be completed, specifying the resources that are needed, establishing the teams to carry out the work, setting up appropriate mechanisms to coordinate and manage the process and reaching agreement on what is to be produced, by when and how the strategy is to be formally approved. In effect, this phase will be completed when this Road Map is agreed and approved.

⁴ FAO (2014)

- **Assessment** – which focuses on a detailed review of the current processes and products that make up agricultural and rural statistics in Georgia. The output from this phase will be an in-depth Country Assessment, which will be based on a Country Profile and will include a number of indicators of the current capacity of the system. Information for the assessment has already been compiled through the use of a comprehensive standard country assessment questionnaire⁵ completed by a number of key stakeholders.
- **Consultation** – in many respects this will be the most important part of the preparation process. If the strategy is to be effective and especially if it is to be properly implemented, then it is essential that it is widely supported and agreed by most stakeholders. Stakeholders will include: the main producers of agricultural and rural statistics, including those agencies for the main source data; users of the statistics, including government agencies, researchers, the business sector, the media, international agencies, development partners and farmers and their families. The consultation process must be comprehensive and carried out in a way that allows those who have something to say to have their voices heard.
- **Planning** – this is where the goals and objectives of the strategy are identified and priorities decided upon, based on a realistic assessment of needs, resources and constraints.
- **Approval and launching** – the last part of the strategy preparation process will set out how it is to be formally approved and how it is to be launched. In general, if the strategy is to receive wide acceptance then it is important that it is seen to be a formal government document with approval at a high level.

1.4. Objectives and Outputs

The main output from the SPARS preparation process will be the strategy document itself. This will set out the broad goals and objectives, a set of strategies that will achieve these, a more detailed action plan for the first one or two years, an overall budget and financing plan and a specific set of proposals to monitor and report on progress.

This document will need to be closely coordinated with all the other national and international processes that are already in progress. How this will be done is discussed in the next section.

⁵ FAO (2014b) url: http://www.gsars.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Guidelines_Country-Assessment_FINAL.pdf

2. Coordination with Other National Plans and Strategies

2.1. The Strategy for Agricultural Development in Georgia 2015-2020

The strategy for agricultural development was launched in 2015 and sets out seven strategic goals to be achieved by 2020. These are:

1. Enhanced competitiveness of rural entrepreneurs
2. Institutional development
3. Amelioration and soil fertility
4. Regional and sectorial development – value chain development
5. Ensuring food security
6. Food safety, veterinary and plant protection
7. Climate change, environment and biodiversity

Each of these goals has a number of measures or actions to be carried out and 32 of these are identified in total. Each of these actions is likely to require one or more indicators to monitor progress and to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy. The SPARS document will need to identify how the data that will be needed to generate these indicators will be collected and compiled.

2.2. The EU – Georgia Association Agreement

The Agreement aims to “to promote political association and economic integration between the Parties based on common values and close links, including by increasing Georgia's participation in EU policies, programmes and agencies”⁶. Strengthening the Georgian Statistical System (GSS) and ensuring that is aligned and consistent with the ESS is a major input into promoting economic cooperation between Georgia and the EU. In the medium to long-term the aim is gradually to align statistical legislation and processes with those operating in the EU. The Agreement includes a commitment to strengthen cooperation in a number of statistical domains including “*agricultural statistics, including agricultural censuses and environment statistics*”.

⁶ Association Agreement, between the European Union and the European Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part, Article 1, (2).a.

As the strategy for agricultural and rural statistics is developed, therefore, it will be important to take into account both the technical and financial support being provided under the AA as well as the requirement to ensure that statistical legislation and practice is aligned with the Statistical Requirements Compendium, which is updated annually by Eurostat.

2.3. The European Neighbourhood Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development

The ENPARD programme is already providing budget support and technical assistance to support the development of agriculture in Georgia. While support for agricultural statistics is not explicitly included in the project documentation, it is widely recognised that better statistics are needed both in their own right and as a crucial input to agricultural development generally. Review missions are carried out annually to review progress on the general and special conditions that govern the disbursement of the budget support tranches. As part of the review mission for the third tranche, specific recommendations were made about agricultural statistics, recognising the importance of the 2014 census of agriculture and making recommendations about a review of the statistical legislation, developing a farm register and a unique identification code and improving the coverage and timeliness of the annual crop surveys. All these issues will need to be included within SPARS.

Discussions are also under way about a second ENPARD support programme from 2017 onwards. It is expected that in this programme statistics will be covered explicitly and that improvements to agricultural statistics, focusing on the issues outlined above will feature in the special conditions for budget support. It is understood that agreement on ENPARD II is likely to be reached before the end of this year and it will be very important, therefore, to ensure that the changes required to current practices and operations set out in the special conditions are included in SPARS and in the detailed work programmes.

2.4. The New National Strategy for Statistics

The fact that GEOSTAT will be preparing a new national strategy for statistics as the same time as SPARS is important for a number of reasons. First of all, both processes are clearly closely related and the results for each one will support and feed into the other. The statistics strategy will set the framework for statistical development over the period to 2018. In particular, it will set plans for updating the laws and regulations governing statistical activities, how the statistical system as a whole will be managed and how activities will be coordinated across agencies. One area that is expected to receive attention will be the development of the concept of national statistics and the need to support the exchange of data between agencies, while still protecting the

confidentiality of information about individuals. SPARS will feed into the statistics strategy and will also inform the need for investment in people and in the infrastructure.

2.5. Promoting Rural Development

Rural development is an objective of ENPARD and is also highlighted in the strategy for agricultural development. As yet there is not a formal statement of the government's strategy or policy objectives in this area, but it is understood that the Government intends to prepare and publish such a document in the near future, probably in 2016. While the strategy, therefore, may not be in place before the SPARS process is completed, there are likely to be sufficient ideas in place to provide good guidance. Areas that are likely to be important will include linking data from the agricultural and integrated household surveys, possibly at the level of enumeration areas making use of geo-referencing.

2.6. Environmental Management and Protection

Environmental concerns are one of the seven strategic concerns in the strategy for the development of agriculture, where managing the impact of climate change and protecting environmental resources are identified as key concerns. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection (MENRP) is also keen to include environmental statistics within the scope of SPARS, especially as many issues are concerned with the interaction of agricultural production, poverty and the management of natural resources. To a considerable extent many of the issues that arise in the links between GEOSTAT and MOA will also apply with MENRP.

3. Preparation of SPARS

3.1. The Scope

It is proposed that the scope of the SPARS for Georgia should be set reasonably widely, at least initially, in order to respond to current and emerging data needs and to link with other planning processes. The scope, therefore, will be as follows.

- **Agricultural production activities** – concerned with documenting the use of inputs, the production of agricultural commodities and their disposal.
- **Other rural production activities** – including forestry, fisheries, especially aquaculture, and other things considered to be important.
- **The management of environmental resources** – focusing especially on statistics related to the management and preservation of resources important to agriculture, including land fertility and water.

- **Rural development** – where the focus is expected to be on the welfare and well being of the rural population and the ways in which livelihood choices are changing.

3.2. The Timeframe

In order to fit in with the implementation of the government’s strategy for agricultural development, it is proposed that the timeframe for SPARS will be from 2016 to 2020 – a five-year period. In order to coordinate with the evolving new national strategy for statistics, however, it is proposed that more detailed work programmes will be prepared for the first three years only and activities for 2019 and 2020 will be developed in more detail through a detailed mid-term review that will be planned to be completed in 2018.

3.3. Organization and Management

There seems to be widespread agreement among stakeholders that the process of preparing and then implementing SPARS should be led and managed by GEOSTAT. While a number of other organisations, especially MOA and MENRP will be closely involved, having the preparation of SPARS led by GEOSTAT will enable the synergies between the agricultural and the statistics strategies to be realised and coordination strengthened.

To manage the preparation it is proposed to establish a small and flexible working group, led by the head of the Agricultural and Environment Statistics Division of GEOSTAT. This group will include specialists from MOA, especially the Policy - Analysis Department and staff from MENRP. Other people can be brought into the group as required. Draft terms of reference for the group are provided in Annex I.

To provide supervision and overall guidance to the preparation process it is also proposed to establish a small Steering Committee of senior level decision makers that will meet once every two or three weeks as required. This group will include senior managers from GEOSTAT, participation from MOA and MENRP at the level of Deputy Ministers and representatives from some development partners. Draft terms of reference are set out in Annex II.

3.4. Consultation

Experience from many other countries and guidance from agencies such as FAO⁷ and the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century (PARIS21) indicate that the process of consultation is a crucial part of preparing a successful strategy. If the resulting SPARS document is to be effective and if it is to be put into effect, then it is essential that all the main stakeholders understand what has been proposed, support the broad

⁷ FAO (2014a)

objectives and are committed to making the required investments and changes. For this to be the case it is vital that they all have a chance to be involved in the discussions around the development of the strategy and that they are able to contribute to the conclusions and recommendations.

The main stakeholders that should be consulted are expected to include the following.

- **Data producers** – including agencies such as GEOSTAT, MOA, MENRP, and others.
- **Data users** – including officials from central and local government, politicians, researchers, universities, NGOs working on agricultural and rural issues, the media and representatives of international agencies and development partners.
- **Data providers** – those people who will be asked to provide data through surveys, censuses and other data collection processes, especially farmers and their representatives.
- **Financing agencies** – the agencies that will provide the resources to implement the strategy, especially the Ministry of Finance and representatives of development partners.

Given the limited time available to complete the preparation of SPARS, it is clear that the consultation process will need to be carefully managed. It is proposed that consultation will be carried out through the following mechanisms.

- **Public meetings** – both within and outside Tbilisi. It is anticipated that there will need to be two or three meetings in Tbilisi with the main stakeholders, to launch the preparation process and to present and discuss the draft strategy. It is also recommended that a limited number of meetings be held with stakeholders outside Tbilisi in perhaps two or three centres. These meetings will be an important way of publicising the SPARS process and of getting feedback from key people, especially farmers and people living in rural areas.
- **Focus groups** – it may be possible to establish a small number of focus groups with specialist interests and knowledge to discuss key aspects of the strategy. Examples might include NGOs active in the area of agriculture and rural development and researchers working in the same areas. Where possible, help should be sought from local partners to set up and organise these groups.

- **Interviews with key stakeholders** – the working group will need to work closely with a number of key stakeholders and will need to meet with them from time to time.
- **Feedback from stakeholders** – it will also be important to establish a process to consult with stakeholders making use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter and an internet or email based process to invite comments on important documents, including drafts of the strategy.

3.5. Activities and the Proposed Timetable

It is proposed that preparation of SPARS will be started in August and the aim will be to produce a final draft document by mid December. A draft timetable is as follows and a more detailed activity plan is set out in Annex IV.

Activity	Responsibility	Target Date for Completion
In-depth Country Assessment Report	Consultants	7 August 2015
Roadmap for developing a SPARS	Consultants	7 August 2015
Draft Country Proposal	Consultants	7 August 2015
Roadmap agreed and resources identified	FAO, GEOSTAT	14 August 2015
Technical Group and Steering Committee established	GEOSTAT and local consultant	14 August 2015
Consultation process	Technical Group and consultants	2 October 2015
Goals and targets agreed	Technical Group and consultants	30 October 2015
Action plan drafted	Technical Group and consultants	13 November 2015
Draft SPARS document circulated for comments	Technical Group and consultants	27 November 2015
Final draft presented	GEOSTAT	15 December 2015

4. Resource Needs and a Budget

4.1. Staffing and Technical Assistance

Completing a comprehensive, but realistic SPARS document, with a strong chance of being implemented will require significant inputs of staff time as

well as additional technical assistance. In terms of staff time it is anticipated that inputs will be required from GEOSTAT, MOA and MENPR. Based on experience from other countries, it is expected that staff allocated to the working group will need to spend between one third and one half of their time between August and December 2015 on SPARS related tasks. In addition, senior staff will also need to devote between one to two hours a week to support the work of the steering group.

In discussions with GEOSTAT and other partners it had been agreed that additional technical assistance will be needed between August and December 2015 to support SPARS preparation. It is proposed that the following technical assistance inputs will be required.

- **National expert in strategic planning**– to support the work of the working group and other processes. This input has already been contracted and it is anticipated that the national expert will provide about 60 days of support between August and December 2015.
- **International consultant in strategic planning** – this input will be required to support the SPARS process. It is anticipated that it will include two missions to Georgia for about 18 days in total, together with some technical back up provided remotely. The second mission will need to coincide with the preparation of the draft SPARS document and its launch at the December workshop.
- **Consultation on survey design and management** – this input will be required to support GEOSTAT to develop plans to increase the sample size and improve the timeliness of the results from the agricultural survey. The input will be provided by a national consultant and further technical support is likely to be needed in 2016 as the work plan for the survey is implemented.
- **Consultation in micro-data management and documentation** – this consultation will be required to help GEOSTAT document and archive the micro-data from the 2014 population and agricultural censuses and then help develop procedures to provide researchers and other data user access to anonymised data files for analysis. The first consultation will take the form of a short workshop in Tbilisi, but further inputs are likely to be required in 2016 to implement the recommendations. It is anticipated that this support will be provided from PARIS21 as part of its work for the International Household Survey Network⁸.

⁸ For more information see: <http://www.ihnsn.org/home/>

4.2. The Budget

A draft budget is provided below. This is based on the assumption that the time of all Georgian Government staff is provided as an in-kind contribution. In addition, it does not include any costs associated with the inputs by the national expert, on the basis that this has already been budgeted for by FAO. The international technical assistance for a consultant in micro-data management and documentation is also not included in the budget total since it is hoped that this will be financed by PARIS21.

The estimated total cost of preparing SPARS is US\$52,405

Item	Estimated Cost (USD)
International technical assistance (fees, fares, per diems)	\$28,200
National consultants	\$12,500
Consultation costs (workshops, interpretation etc)	\$9,705
Other costs (publications, translation etc)	\$2,000
Total cost	\$52,405

4.3. Mobilising the Resources

It is anticipated that a considerable proportion of these costs could be financed by FAO from the funds they hold to support the implementation of the Global Strategy for Agricultural and Rural Statistics. If it is impossible to meet the full costs from this source, then there may be an opportunity to finance at least some of the international technical assistance through the ENPARD technical assistance funds.

References

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Annex I Draft Terms of Reference for the Technical Working Group

The Technical Working Group (TWG), supported by FAO consultants, will be responsible for preparing the SPARS. In consultation with different stakeholders the Team will bring together technical specialists from different agencies under the leadership of GEOSTAT. In particular, the TWG will carry out the following tasks.

- Propose a broad vision for the agricultural statistical system over the next five to ten years to meet current and future needs in the country.
- Bring together professional staff from different organizations as needed to design and prepare the components of the SPARS.
- Guide the development of SPARS as per the approved Roadmap and report on progress to the Steering Committee from time to time
- Provide guidance on roles and responsibilities of major data producing agencies in the NSDS/SPARS process
- Liaise with GEOSTAT on the integration of SPARS within the NSDS
- Identify the approaches and mechanisms needed to overcome data gaps to improve data quality, improve methodology and remove duplications.
- Examine current and emerging demands for data across agencies, their frequency of collection, appropriateness of existing methodologies and recommend prioritization in the SPARS framework
- Guide and monitor the implementation of annual work plans of SPARS through quarterly and annual reports

Membership of the TWG may well vary depending on need, but is expected to include the following.

1. Convenor: Head of the Agricultural and Environmental Statistics Division of GEOSTAT
2. Senior staff from relevant Divisions in GEOSTAT
3. Staff from the Policy and Analysis Division of the Ministry of Agriculture
4. Staff from the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection
5. Representatives of other major users, including research agencies and NGOs.
6. Other major stakeholders as needed.

It is expected that the TWG will start work in August and continue until the SPARS is completed and approved. The working pattern will depend on needs and progress with the overall timetable.

Annex II Draft Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee

The purpose of the Steering Committee (SC) is to provide high-level government backing to the SPARS development process and to monitor and review progress. It will provide overall guidance to the development process of SPARS at various stages and to recommend or approve the Roadmap and the final SPARS document for implementation.

It is proposed that the Steering Committee will have the following members:

1. Chairman – First Deputy Minister MoA
2. Executive Director GEOSTAT
3. Deputy Director GEOSTAT
4. Deputy Minister – Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection
5. Head of FAO Office in Georgia
6. USDA
7. EU Agricultural Attaché
8. Secretary – Head of the Agricultural and Environmental Statistics Division, GEOSTAT

In particular it is proposed that the SC will carry out the following tasks:

- Provide guidance and supervision on the alignment of SPARS with national policy and development priorities;
- Ensure that SPARS is coordinated with the new NSDS being prepared for Georgia;
- Approve the key SPARS documents and processes such as the roadmap document and the evaluation and final SPARS strategic documents;
- Identify what mechanisms are needed to formally approve or adopt the SPARS and to manage its implementation;
- Make recommendations to the Government on how the implementation of SPARS can be financed;
- Identify how best SPARS can be integrated with relevant national strategies and development plans;
- Help to resolve coordination issues between stakeholders

During the preparation of SPARS it is anticipated that the SC will meet as needed, probably once a month.

Annex III A tentative activity Plan for SPARS Preparation

Activity	August					September				October				November					Comments	
	3	10	17	24	31	7	14	21	28	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30		7
Approve Roadmap	■																			To be completed by 14 August
In-depth Country Assessment Report																				
Country Proposal																				
Set up working and steering groups																				
Prepare material for consultation processes		■	■	■	■															
Prepare programme for consultation		■	■	■	■															
Set up website and social media accounts			■	■	■															
Meetings of the steering group			■				■			■					■				■	
Other workshops							■		■		■									
Consultation processes						■	■	■	■	■	■	■								
First mission on strategic planning										■										
Tbilisi workshop (launch of the project)										■										
Drafting of goals and targets										■	■	■	■							
Consultation on survey planning										■	■	■	■							
Mission on micro-data management											■	■	■	■						Proposed in conjunction with PARIS21
Drafting of components											■	■	■	■						
First draft of SPARS														■	■					
Draft out for consultation																■	■	■		
Final draft of SPARS																	■	■		
Second mission on strategic planning																		■	■	
Final workshop																			■	
Approval process																				To be confirmed