Revenue Administration Fiscal Information Toolkit (RA-FIT) - International Monetary Fund

Objective and features

1. Objective
RA-FT aims to assist revenue administrations in improving their performance measurement and reporting, and to provide data and analyses that can help improve cross-country comparisons.

2. Institutional coverage
National governments.

3. Technical coverage
- RA-FT technical coverage includes:
  1. revenue management and tax administration;
  2. human resource management;
  3. management information systems; and
  4. budget management.

4. Application method
Self-assessment.

Methodology

5. Methodology
RA-FT is a survey-based data gathering toolkit designed to collect revenue administration information. Data is collected through the voluntary International Survey on Revenue Administration (ISORA) survey. The survey covers the following areas:

1. Revenue Collection
2. Institutional Arrangements
3. Budget and Human Resources
4. Segmentation
5. Registration
6. Dispute Resolution
7. Service and Education
8. Collection and Enforcement
9. Verification/audit
10. Uses by the government and members of the PFM community
11. Access to methodology
12. Access to assessment results
13. PFM capacity building

The survey consists of a combination of static and dynamic questions. Static questions focus on aspects such as institutional structure, level of autonomy, and power set out in specific legislations. In contrast, dynamic questions relate to numbers and values of transactions for fiscal years and other variable information that changes with each survey iteration.

6. Benchmarking system
RA-FT is primarily a data collection tool. Data collected through the ISORA survey is not benchmarked and graded against each other.

7. Linkage to PFM framework
Data available on the RA-FIT portal links to the following PFM performance indicators: fiscal strategy (F5-15), budget preparation process (F5-17), and legislative scrutiny of budgets (F5-18).

8. Complementarity with PEF framework
RA-FT is primarily focused on collecting data from tax administrations. The tool can also be used for validating insights gathered by other diagnostic tools such as PEF framework.

Development and use

9. Development and coordination
The first round of RA-FT was launched by the IMF in 2016. The survey was administered using an Excel spreadsheet and covered 86 countries. The second round of RA-FT was launched in 2016 and used an online platform to gather data from 135 countries. Other individual organisations collected data from their members separately for the purpose of internal review and analysis. All individual organisations shared data they collected with the IMF using a common questionnaire. In 2018, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Inter-American Centre of Tax Administrations (CIAT), the Inter-European Organisation of Tax Administrations (IOTA), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to collect tax administration information using a common questionnaire and through the IMF’s RA-FIT platform. Subsequently, a single survey was launched in 2018, participating tax administrations in 2018. OECD, CIAT, IOTA, and IMF have jointly carried out two surveys (2018 and 2019).

The ISORA is administered online using the RA-FIT platform. While the ISORA is jointly developed by participating organisations, the RA-FIT portal is developed and managed by the IMF. A guide is published alongside the survey. Further queries relating to the data collected and data available can be sent to the RA-FIT help desk.

Ensuring the accuracy of survey responses is the primary responsibility of participating countries. The custodian carries out general plausibility and technical checks in order to qualify control ISORA responses. This includes ensuring proper use of local currency values to the nearest thousands and querying significant variations in responses across years with the specific revenue administration. However, if the revenue administration considers the data unreliable, the query is not pursued further.

11. Uses by the government and members of the PFM community
The data has multiple uses, including partner organisations responsible for designing and administering the survey and revenue administration in countries providing the data. Both partner organisations and revenue administrations use the survey data to carry out subsequent analysis in accordance with their own needs and programs, as presented below:

1. IMF publishes Understanding Revenue Administration in its publications database (search term: ISORA: Understanding Revenue Administration) alongside each round of surveys to discuss the key findings that emerge.
2. CIAT uses the data to review institutional structure, organization, and autonomy of tax administrations, including their resources, personnel, and basic characteristics of their operation. These data are discussed in the publications: Overview of Tax Administrations.
3. IOTA discussed the findings from ISORA in the annual meeting of their Technical Working Group (TWG) on ISORA in 2018.
4. OECD uses data from the survey to analyse and highlight key trends, recent innovations, examples of good practices and performance measures, and indicators with regard to tax administrations. Key findings from OECD’s analysis are included in OECD’s Tax Administration Data (TADAT).

12. Sequencing with other tools
ISORA report data can be compared and sequenced with the increasing set of evidence-based assessments of tax administration such as TADAT (B06).

13. PFM capacity building
No PFM capacity development function is envisaged for the tool. The IMF provided a training course targeted toward officials responsible for completing the 2018 ISORA.

14. Tracking of changes and frequency of assessments
RA-FIT is not designed to track performance changes over time. ISORA is carried out once every two years. Four rounds of the surveys have been carried out to date. Following the 2020 iteration, a shorter version of the ISORA is planned to be carried out annually to focus on collecting data that changes on a yearly basis. Once every four years, the partner organisations will run a longer survey which will include questions about organisational structure and legislation that generally change less frequently.

15. Resource requirements
The IMF has one and a half full-time equivalent staff who work on the survey all year round. In addition, there are also employees from the IT department that are involved in maintaining both the data collection and data dissemination platforms.