

DATA FORMATS

Case Study on an issue resolved by the Connemara Programme

2016

Key Points

- A Single Integrated Record (SIR) had to be created to manage standard and unique data elements
- The SIR data entry is supported through the use of Value Lists
- Many data types have multiple fields to allow for future growth.
- Extensive free text fields are provided for unstructured detail
- Social media and other links such as Web and Email are captured.
- SIR fields only appear on the front end if they contain data.
- A SIR is only displayed to end users if it has at least one graphic.

The Issue

For the 2016 release a more appropriate format for the wide number of subject areas had to be introduced in order to reduce the complexity of the system. The original format had 5 sub formats. This proved to be cumbersome and inefficient for analysis and users.

The Approach

Over 40 third party data formats were examined. None provided the scope and flexibility required by the Programme. The 5 sub categories used in Version 2 of the data base were examined for common elements and also differentiators. A common format was then arrived at called the Single Integrated Record (SIR). The key characteristics of this format are:

- 1) Capability to capture the common elements of all the forms of data
- 2) Introduce a standard for data fields, spelling and categorisation
- 3) Ability to capture the differentiator data variables in the sub sets
- 4) Ability to support detailed analysis and consistent front end use

The Result

The SIR record that emerged has over 450 data fields.

Core fields are list drive to ensure that these data are consistent across all records and to speed up plus reduce the data entry load on users. Key standard lists include Towns, Categories, Sub Categories.

Some data types have multiple fields such as Photos (10), Web addresses (10), Phone numbers (10). This is designed to provide for future needs without having to redevelop the database. Free text fields are provided for Notes. Short notes can take up to 10,000 characters and long notes are unlimited. (The longest note to date have 25,000 characters).

Over 40,000 SIR elements are in the database and 7,000 are used on the visible site at www.myconnemara.com.