

Improving the Strategic Aspect of Federal Land Management

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Federal land management is an integral part of land management. Improving the strategies within the Federal Land Commissioner's office (FLC) would provide a more improved approach in federal land management. This research identified the current corporate and business-level strategies implored to address federal land management. The implementation of strategies differs vastly from the theories and the lack of continuous improvement steps within the organization has affected the organization to successfully evaluate the strategies and to exploit the strategic advantages that the FLC has. FLC could implement the recommendations provided to chart a more comprehensive strategic management objectives and goals in providing a better service delivery in the context of federal land management.

Keywords: Federal Land Commissioner, federal land management, strategic management

INTRODUCTION

Land management is part and parcel of land administration in the sustainable land development of a nation. Sustainable development can be achieved with the participation of all stakeholders to provide a check and balance towards government decisions (Prno & Scott Slocombe, 2012). United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM) (2019) suggests that a responsible land administration is when it continuously positions its processes and resources with the dynamic demands of society. The focus of land administration issues currently dwells closely on good governance (Asaaga, 2021; Sebastian & Sakthivel, n.d.). The shift of land administration concerns from the security of tenure, and land ownership equality towards molding land administration through good governance ethics (Van Der Molen, 2002), provides an opportunity to understand even better the strategies deployed by the federal land management authorities to provide better service deliveries.

The Federal Land Commissioner (FLC) was established via the Federal Land Commissioner Act 1957 (Act 349) to procure, hold and managing immovable assets or interest on immovable assets (land, buildings, mortgages, tenancy or leases) on behalf of the Federal Government of Malaysia (Objects & Reasons of Federal Land Commissioner Bill, 1957). To provide a simple perspective for understanding the functions of FLC, it can be considered as a real estate management entity for the Federal Government of Malaysia. The role of FLC is limited to its confines, that is, Federal Land assets and coordinating land administration only (Ganason, 2012a). This limitation of jurisdiction is because, under the State List of the Ninth Schedule of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, land matters are the exclusive purview of the respective State Authorities (Ganason, 2012b).

The Federal Government owns a total of 28,944 titled lands comprising of approximately 686,044.73442 hectares and a total of 5505 lots of reserve lands amounting to 14,046.5409 hectares

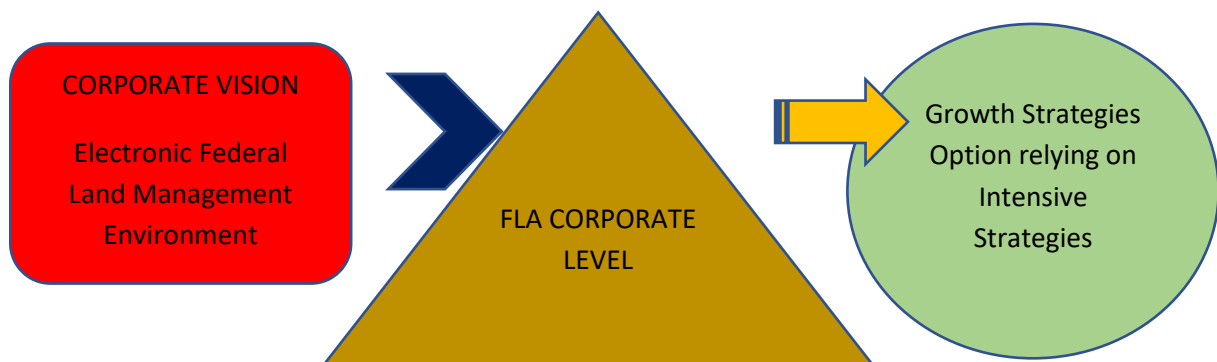
(MYeTaPP, 2022). The total area of land is 700,091.27512 hectares, making up 2% of land in Malaysia, an area as big as the Wilayah Persekutuan of Kuala Lumpur, Melaka, and Negeri Sembilan combined. (Reference: Total area of Malaysia is 32,984,700 hectares). These huge areas of land are not fully utilized when we set aside the government buildings, federal highways, hospitals, schools, and other social amenities. Since 2015, the land area left undeveloped by the Federal Government is about 4946.438 hectares or 947 lots, with large tracts of land belonging to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Health (Sallehuddin & Ganason, 2015).

This paper will analyze whether there are any strategic management issues within the Federal Land Commissioner's office in managing federal land. The analysis will focus on the application process, processing, decision-making, monitoring, and collection of revenue of Federal Land. The scope of enforcement of federal land will not be considered in this analysis because it would dwell into intersecting powers with the state land administration, which is beyond the control of FLC. The recommendations and strategies derived from the research could be adopted by the FLC to provide effective, responsive, accountable, and swift service delivery to the stakeholders.

CURRENT CORPORATE-LEVEL STRATEGIES

The Corporate level of FLC is the FLC and his two Assistants FLC. Currently, the main vision of FLC is to provide an electronic federal land administration to reduce processing time, an accurate database to assist effective and accountable decision-making processes and a more customer and staff-friendly interface in operating the system that encompasses better service delivery. Providing this will enable FLC to optimize the usage of the federal land bank for socio-economic infrastructure developments under each Malaysian Plan and to generate added revenue on undeveloped federal lands. The corporate strategies practiced by FLC can be identified as Intensive strategies or growth strategies options in addressing the need to provide a paradigm shift in federal land management. Figure 1 provides the overview of the FLA corporate-level strategy model.

**FIGURE 1
THE FLC CORPORATE STRATEGY MODEL**



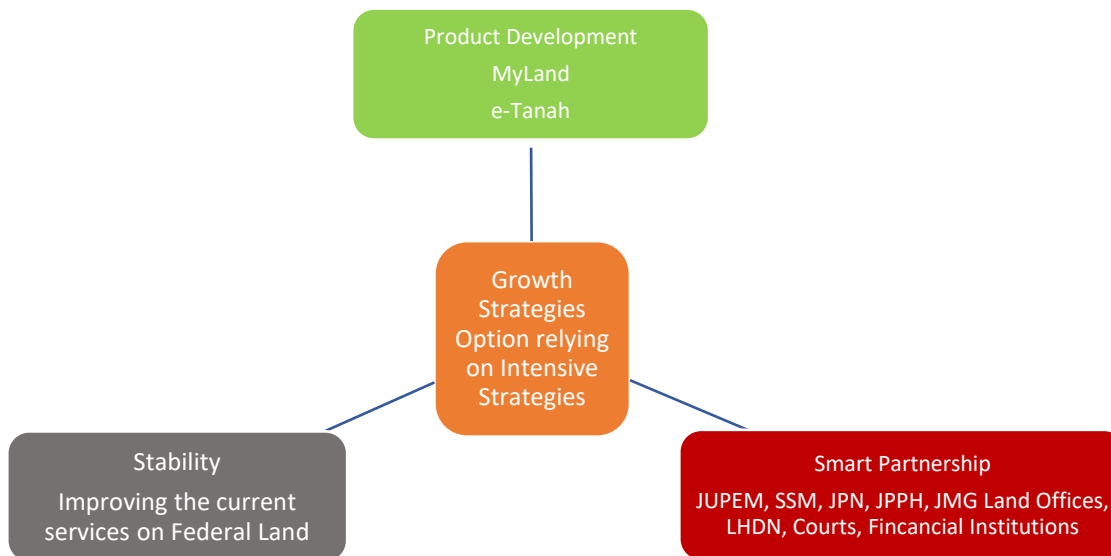
Currently, the information of federal land is not available in any public domain, and administratively it is regarded as classified information. The disturbance in acquiring this information has made many stakeholders unable to make the efficient and proper decision in acquiring strategic land for socio economic development. The options were always to look for new land and not tapping the federal land bank. Information that are relayed manually or in secondary forms makes the duration of information relay longer and to some decision-makers, becomes a nuisance. Thus, strategies that have been adopted are more product development strategies. This is where the development of a product called MyLand to cater to the flow of federal land information. This product will provide a platform that would assist in achieving the vision of better service delivery that is being put forward by the corporate level of FLC, which are to reduce

processing time, an accurate database to assist effective and accountable decision-making process and a more customer and staff-friendly interface.

The corporate level had not adopted other strategies like integration strategies, diversification strategies, and defensive strategies purely because FLC does not face any competitors in the market of providing land management services in federal land. If the research was discussing purely on land management market, then integrating these various strategies would provide a strategic advantage to the organization. FLC's corporate level has not indulged in integration strategies is purely because the product or the services that is provided have no substitute in nature. The rules and regulations that are in place to provide adequate protection to FLC, stakeholders, the public or businesses. The resources (i.e., land, staffing, budget) needed is controlled by the government and there are proper structures to provide these resources. Providing better service is the product that gauges the value of FLC and the need to provide that product in a package that suits the needs of the day is much more severe compared to controlling a whole supply chain that provides the resources only to a single proponent.

FLC is not the focused on diversifying its business. It remains a federal management entity that deals with land matters. The services it renders only within the scope of land administration regulations. The products like the e-Land and MyLand systems are heavily linked with regulations and statutes. Thus, moving away from its main task is not in the pipeline, and there is no indication by the government to include non-movable assets of the federal government to be managed by FLC. The Public Works Department currently manages those assets. There is neither a policy shift by the Government to reduce land administration staffing or transferring the functions of FLC to a statutory body or a government-linked company. Thus, a defensive strategy approach in line of retrenchment, divestiture or liquidation is needed to stay afloat or to provide a transition of authority to another entity.

FIGURE 2
THE CORPORATE LEVEL STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTED AT FLA



The corporate level of FLA currently focuses on intensive strategies that focus on product development, smart partnership, and maintaining stability to provide better federal land service delivery to reduce processing time, an accurate database to assist effective and accountable decision-making process, and a more customer and staff friendly interface. Figure 2 summarizes the corporate-level strategies of FLA.

CURRENT BUSINESS LEVEL STRATEGIES

The business level in FLC are the Directors that head each division. Using the Resource Based View (RBV) developed by Barney (1991), from the research, it can be summarized that FLA business strategies are based on it. Combining various resources within FLA, the business level has created strategic capabilities to provide that competitive advantage and better service delivery. Supporting the need for a better service delivery vision depicted by the corporate level, the business level has to strategize to create capabilities that would reduce processing time, develop a reliable and accurate federal land database and provide human resource competency that would make the engagement between staffs and customers much friendlier.

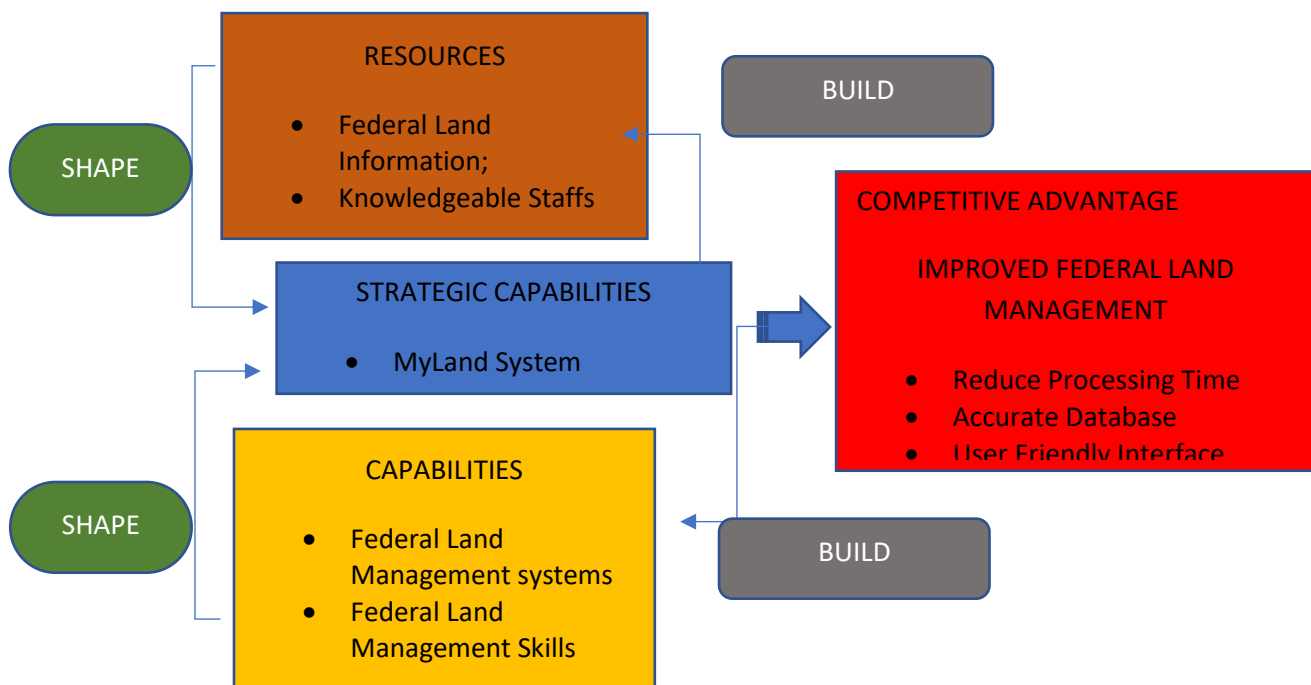
The business level has identified resources that fit the criteria in an RBV model that are (i) valuable, (ii) rare, (iii) imperfectly imitable, and (iv) non-substitutable. The main resource that FLC owns the staffs that it trains and positions to do its various federal land management tasks. The business level identifies and provides on-the-job training, support, and coaching to its staff to understand the federal land management legislation, procedures, land data management, and also land administration information system. The rotation of staff in the procurement of federal land, management, and database development, tenancy and leasing of federal land, and finally, federal land enforcement provides the overall skill for federal land management. These trades and skills are only obtained by staff who work in FLC. Developing a niche working environment that is very endemic to the subset of land administration makes the skills and competency of staff in FLC very unique, thus makes it a strategic advantage to public service as a whole. Staff transferred out of FLC have a higher chance of being placed in most of the development units of ministries that handle project management. Having the skills that were gained while in FLC is an added advantage and provides better land management as a whole.

Once the business level has managed to sustain a knowledgeable workforce, trying to translate that knowledge into the system is another strategy that the business level is trying to implement. This strategy can be seen in the development of the MyLand system, which will propel federal land management in the context of tenancy and leases. Translating the procedures into systems becomes much easier because the staffs understand the ramification of each step and how to integrate federal land data and various other information to provide suggestions to decision-makers in the context of tenancy and leasing approvals. The shortcomings in a manual-based process can be addressed, and the needs of customers can be better addressed while developing the MyLand system. These are the strategic advantages that FLC has in developing a better federal land management system compared to other ministries.

Collaborating with the National Land and Survey Institute provides good training and upskilling programmes for FLCs staff that need refresher courses and basic and advanced courses in land management to prepare themselves to serve FLC. With the introduction of the Land Administrator Certificate (LAC), the government recognizes these strategic capabilities and provides human resource managers an added input when it comes to placement of these special skilled staffs in various departments for the betterment of federal land management a whole. The business level ensures that all FLC staff obtains mandatory training from the institute to mold them into skilled federal land managers.

The current business level strategy, as in Figure 3, that is being employed in FLC is the resource capabilities strategy based on RBV theory that supports the vision of the corporate level managers of FLC in providing service delivery that addresses reducing processing time, creating an accurate database to assist effective and accountable decision-making process and a more customer and staff friendly interface.

**FIGURE 3
BUSINESS LEVEL STRATEGY MODEL OF FLC**



STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT ISSUE IN THE ORGANIZATION

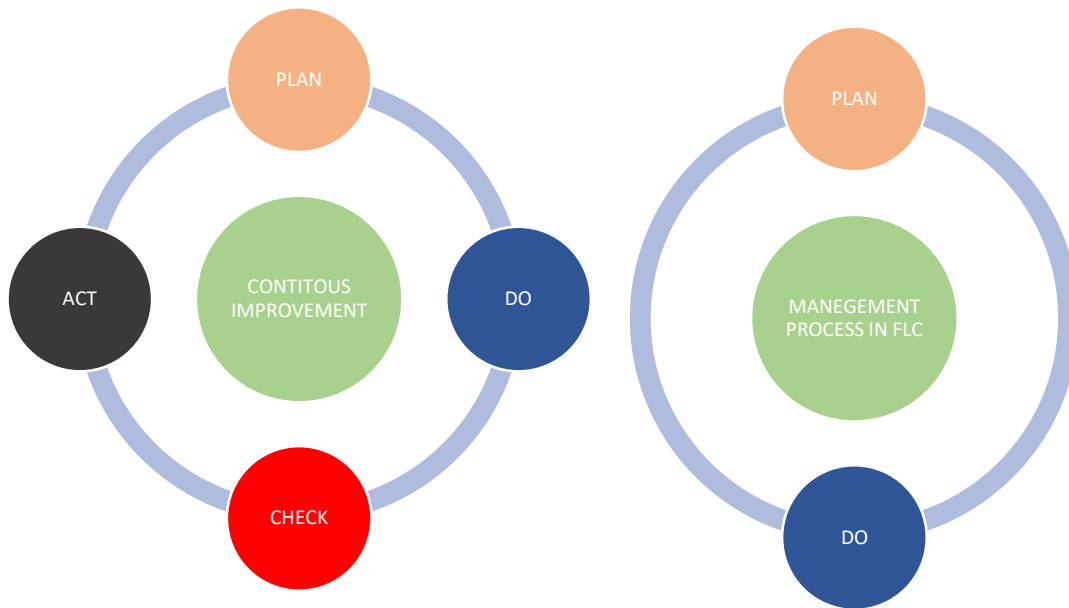
Through the research, it can be deduced that FLC does have some level of coordination of business-level strategies but lacks continuous monitoring of the implementation of those strategies and insufficient self-auditing to gauge the level of organizational performance or corrective measures suggested to improve the strategies implemented. These issues could affect the total understanding of strategic management and provide an added strategic advantage to FLC.

From the research, there are no linkages between each division to achieve the goal of efficient and effective service delivery that is viewed in the corporate-level strategies. Each division works in silo, and there is very little integration from one division to the other in a seamless way. The procurement of federal land does not continuously understand the bursting land bank that have FLC. Actions of procurement are continued based on the application from various federal agencies. The FLC land database keeps updating the information, but they only know the information, and it is not distributed to the procurement division or the tenancy or leasing divisions. The lack of the business level of FLC in analyzing their land bank data makes it very difficult to provide a strategic land management plan to assist the Government as a whole in the procurement of future land for socio economic activities. Bloating the land bank provides higher liabilities to the FLC in the context of increasing quit rent payment and also encroachment of undeveloped land.

Having the land bank data but not using it strategically also falls short in providing land information suitable for tenancy and leasing. FLC still refers to the respective ministries for this information before making the decision which lengthens the processing time and, in some short-term tenancies, becomes uneconomic when the approvals are given. These problems are the lack of continuous monitoring or implementation of the integrated aspect of the corporate strategies. The lack of divisions to sit together and strategize their action makes the whole journey to achieve the organization’s corporate strategy. From the research it could be identified that much of the time has been used to entertain processing work which could have been avoided if the respective division had extracted the strategic information needed through the land

database. More focus in the business level should be on strategic aspects but it has been noticed that the business level is biased towards efficiency and effectiveness which is supposed to be in the operational level. This can be identified as one of the issues in strategic management in FLC where the implementation of strategies is not monitored because of the failure of the business level to identify its role with the operational level.

FIGURE 4
THE NORMAL PDCA CYCLE COMPARED TO THE MANAGEMENT OF FLC



Another issue in FLC is the self-auditing of the strategies put in place and evaluating its performance. Through the research, it can be identified there is no structured auditing by the corporate level on the performance of the business level or the operational level of FLC. Some key performance indexes (KPI) are in place but there rarely translate to the strategies that the organization has put in place. Many of the KPI are superficial indicators but still does not address the strategic advantages that FLC needs to address and to improve. The lack of a structured auditing procedure by either an internal audit or external audit has not been done to date to reflect the performance of the FLC. It is sad to say that the organization could be hanging on in a fragile thread together. A self-reflection on the organization has to be done, and serious thought have to be given after a thorough auditing process has been done to identify the shortcomings the strategies are implementing are facing. From this self-check, the corporate level can identify whether the strategies employed are inefficient or the structure of the organization and the practices that need to be altered. Currently, that information is lacking, and does not help the corporate level provide strategies that could propel the organization to achieve its vision and mission to translate that into value added to FLC.

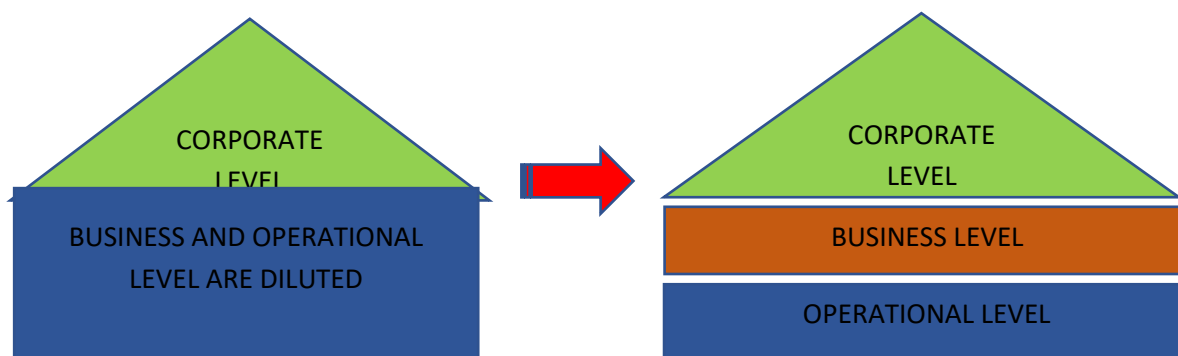
RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the research, the recommendation that FLC could consider is to make some changes in the organizational structure of the FLC that deals with federal land management. The new organization should be a seamless flow of work to achieve effective and efficient service delivery that addresses the three main criteria: reducing processing time, creating an accurate database to assist effective and accountable decision-making process, and a more customer and staff-friendly interface. The current structure provides an avenue for each division to stand alone without the support of another division. This could create a fragmented organization and the effectiveness or efficiency of service delivery could be centered at a

particular division based on the staffing performance. This will not reflect as an organizational achievement but more of a divisional achievement. This is not the objective of FLC in service delivery.

Once the corporate level has addressed the need for an integrated environment, it needs to clearly describe responsibilities between the business level and the operational level within the organization. Currently, the business level is focusing more duties that have been assigned to operational-level staffs. This does not assist in the organization in creating strategic capabilities that would provide a strategic advantage for FLC. When the focus and responsibilities have been set, then each level would understand what it should do based on the strategies that have been cascaded from the corporate level, and those strategies are transformed into strategic capabilities using the strategic resources to create strategic advantages to provide efficient and effective service delivery in the operational level. Figure 5 depicts the institutional structure shift FLC has to undergo to achieve the strategic efforts taken by the business level to provide strategic advantages.

FIGURE 5
SUGGEST THE SHIFT OF THE FLA TO A MUCH MORE DISTINCTIVE STRUCTURE TO
ACHIEVE STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES

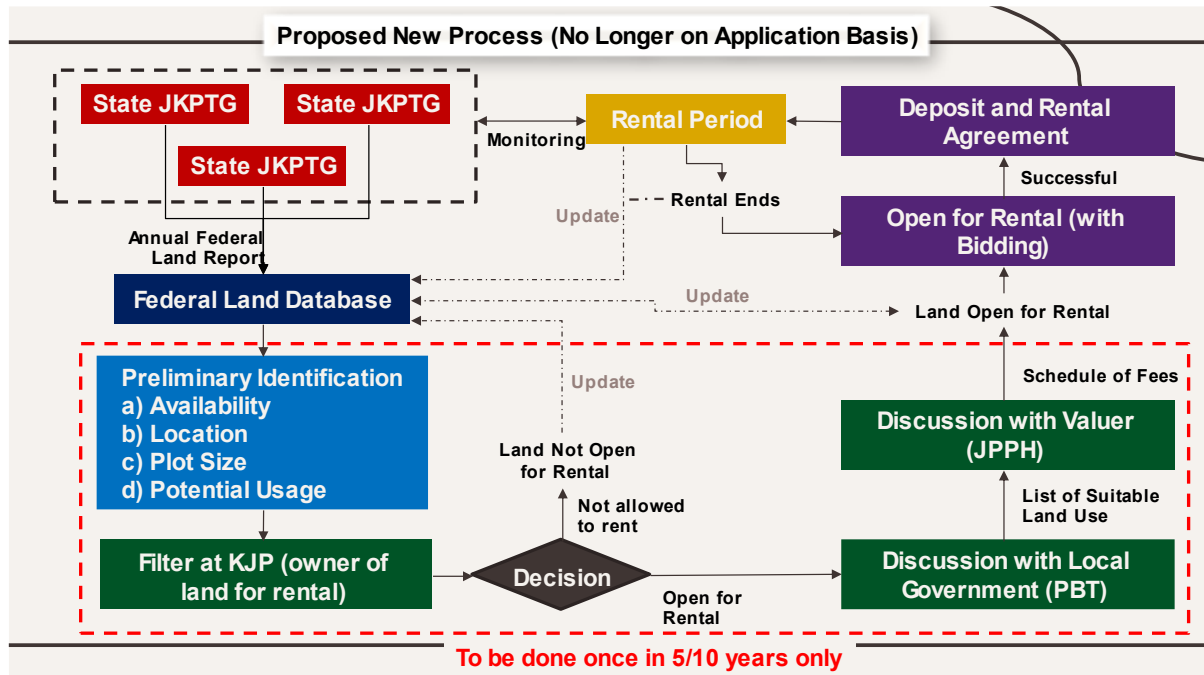


FLC must exploit its federal land bank data to address the core of the strategies. Strategic information analysts should be employed to decode the data that FLC has to provide a matrix of strategic information that could be used for planning, managing, revenue generation, and effective enforcement of federal land. With this information in hand FLC could play an even much more critical role within the Federal government in providing valuable information in socio-economic development projects set in the Malaysian Plan. This will provide the ultra-niche environment or market that FLC could take advantage on for the future, providing strategic information on land. This can be achieved if the MyLand system comes into place. The business level should focus more on this area rather than on the processing aspects of tenancy and leasing, which is the core duties of the operational level.

FLC should inculcate a continuous auditing and performance monitoring structure. It is very important for the corporate level to identify where FLC is positioned currently and how it can steer it in the future. First and foremost, the corporate level should be strict on what KPI needs to be set and whether they align with the organizational vision, mission, and strategies. There should not be free reign on setting up of KPI, in a highly regulated environment it is only proper for a top-down approach is considered. Once the KPIs are in place, a quarterly or half-yearly reflection of the performance must be done using internal audits. It is very important to monitor the work being done to avoid the business process does not stray away and it tries to comply with the strategies core values. Through these performance audit, the business level and corporate level can gauge the effectiveness of each strategy that have been implemented. The positive performing strategies can be continued but the negative performing ones should be reviewed and redeployed with revisions, or changes could be made to the procedures to tailor the strategies. Currently, there is no information on these aspects so improvement cannot be made because the organization does not know if the problem is with the strategies or the structure. The corporate level in FLC can adopt this

recommendation to provide relevant information to help navigate and make a clear direction for FLC. Figure 6 below provides a glimpse of what the new process for tenancy and leases will depict once the recommendations are in place and adheres to all the strategies formulated at the corporate and business level.

FIGURE 6
THE PROPOSED ENHANCEMENT ON TENANCY AND LEASE PROCESSES IN FLA



Note. Developed based on the findings of the research

CONCLUSION

The FLC provides a niche product in the federal land management system. It has taken lots of effort to provide the services that assist the federal government in socio-economic development. Through this research, it can be identified that there are some areas of strategies that need to be adopted by FLC to provide a much better service delivery that would provide a strategic advantage and optimize the resources that the country has for the betterment of socio-economic development. From this research, the areas identified that need enhancement in the area of auditing and monitoring and areas that need to be maintained and nurtured, like the niche skill of its staff on land matters, could be a guide to the FLC corporate level to mold their strategies for the future in federal land management.

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