

Meeting 4 Notes and Actions
January 22, 2021

Next Meeting: February 19, 2021 (9 AM - Noon (EDT)) -- Federal Chief Data Officers and External Researcher Presentations, plus Review of Future State/North Star Input

Meeting Agenda:

1. Perspectives from Federal Evaluation and Performance Improvement Officers on Administrative Data Needs -- Christine Heflin (Department of Commerce), Todd Richardson (Department of Housing and Urban Development), Matthew Soldner (Department of Education), and Christina Yancey (Department of Labor)
2. The Federal Statistical System -- Barry Johnson (Internal Revenue Service), Brian Moyer (Department of Health and Human Services, and Emilda Rivers (National Science Foundation)

I. Perspectives from Federal Evaluation and Performance Improvement Officers on Administrative Data Needs (Christine Heflin (Department of Commerce), Todd Richardson (Department of Housing and Urban Development), Matthew Soldner (Department of Education), and Christina Yancey (Department of Labor)

The presenters discussed examples of using data for program evaluations and for performance improvement initiatives. They discussed both administrative and technology challenges they face in the wide variations in obtaining access to the data they need across federal agencies and linking data sets appropriately. They also identified some ideas for the Committee to consider, including reducing administrative barriers and testing procedures for data access. (See presentation at bea.gov/evidence under Meetings tab.)

Committee Feedback/Discussions:

- **Most Important Areas to Focus on from Performance and Evaluation Perspective:**
 - Standard form or single standard/ standardized data agreement across government to reduce the administrative barriers, a common set of rules to be shared; however, need to make sure these agreements are not more restrictive than what we have today
 - Common checklist so that all parties know what to expect instead of each agency creating its own
 - Replication -- ability to repeat a study or data gathering without going through approval processes again
- **Need Greater Engagement with Program Administrators:** Program evaluation can create defensiveness with program administrators. It is important to engage them on the purpose of the evaluation -- help them better service their constituents/customers.

- **Legislative Action and Requirements:** Federal legislation will be required to meet performance and evaluation needs, including updating the CIPSEA companion legislation to enable sharing combined census and tax data.
- **Broaden the Standardization of Data Sharing Agreements across Government Entities (Including States):** Start with a process to get to standardization on inter-agency agreements and across states. The value to the agencies is the right place to start, but the agreements on data sharing need to include the states and identification of the benefits to the states. Allow states and others to “opt-in.” Gain some success in this area before standardizing agreements or producing an NDA.
- **Location of Data Harmonization and State Relationship Examples:** Envision that data harmonization (matching and linking disparate data sets so that they are comparable) occurs at the agency that owns or has stewardship over the data with support from the National Secure Data Service (NSDS). Today, housing data comes from state and local governments largely through requirements through which subsidies are paid. We need to address how to obtain data without a mandate as well. Information is shared across federal agencies through Inter-Agency Agreements (IIAs) for a nominal charge, but the analogues do not always exist at the state level.
- **Identify Group or Agency in Government that Should Guide the Standardization of Interagency and Intergovernmental Agreements and Data Harmonization:** Suggestion that the Office of Management and Budget should take the lead on this with the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy. Start a repository to capture the data sharing agreements that exist today to assess the commonalities and differences between them.

II. The Federal Statistical System: Definition, Scope, and Future -- (Barry Johnson (Internal Revenue Service), Brian Moyer (Department of Health and Human Services, and Emilda Rivers (National Science Foundation))

(See presentation at bea.gov/evidence under Meetings tab.)

Presenters identified what agencies and subagencies participate in the Federal Statistical System and its core components, its legislative and regulatory mandates, its primary work and activities, examples of its work, and its priorities and pilot projects as it looks to the future.

Committee Feedback/Discussions:

- **Potential for the Federal Statistical Research Data Centers (FSRDCs) to Move to a Virtual Environment for NSDS Engagement:** There is some ability to move to a virtual environment and away from “brick and mortar” locations. This may encounter some legislative challenges to do this as well ability of university partners to meet the needs of NSDS. The FSRDCs and the university partners that share funding would also need a viable funding model to support NSDS either through user fees or other means. Need to

make this affordable for underserved communities. Need to understand how the FSRDCs work for future applicability.

- **Eliciting One Idea to Improve the Sharing Environment:**
 - Advocate for legislative changes, particularly CIPSEA companion legislation to enable sharing combined census and tax data and encourage/support data sharing across agencies, especially data that concern economic impacts
 - Common application for sharing information across government and states that also provides security and appropriateness.
- **Tradeoffs between Speed and Quality Regarding Shared Data and Approvals -- Alternative Infrastructure for Fast Surveys and Data Needs:** Need for a common language used across government and stakeholders to discuss data quality and what we need to know before making a decision on data use.
- **Need for Communications Strategy and Actions:** The multiple dimensions of quality from the different communities as well as a lack of a common language require communications that take these things into account, including complementary and supplementary opportunities to communicate value. Quality is a multi-dimensional issue that depends on data use. The principals need case studies on how to take data at national, state, and local levels.
- **Reducing Barriers Requires Doing What is Practical and Pragmatic to Find Pathways to Standards:** Leverage existing case and the work done with the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) and use it as a model to get to reproducibility, replicability, and transparency, and validation in a distributed system.

IV. Conclusion

The Committee closed by highlighting the planned topics to cover in the next information gathering meetings.

February

Federal Chief Data Officers (Richard Allen, Greg Fortelny, and Ted Kaouk)
External Researchers (Len Burman and Ken Troske)

March

Privacy & Confidentiality Concepts (Charles Cutshall and Shawn Davis)
Privacy & Confidentiality Technologies (Mayank Varia and Len Burman)
Data Ethics (Ed Kwartler)
Public Comment Discussion