



Facilitated Discussion: Outstanding Report Items and Options

September 2022



Outstanding Items

- Data inventories, data catalogs, and the role of the NSDS
- Relationship between the SAP and the NSDS
- NSDS oversight and advice
- Resources and funding

Data Inventory vs. Data Catalog

Data inventory: Each agency is required to have a publicly available data inventory

Data catalog: Presents information across the inventories

- Data.gov
- SAP data catalog

NSDS Organizational Structure and Governance: Produce an integrated inventory with usage statistics

While not a full measure of value, as a baseline, the NSDS, in coordination with the ICSP and the CDO Council, should develop and maintain a publicly available inventory for all data assets available for NSDS projects that features usage statistics. This inventory should be made available using methods that are easy to access and understand, creating a seamless experience for both sophisticated and novice users.

NSDS Technical Infrastructure and Tools: Integrated Data Inventory

The NSDS should produce and maintain an integrated data inventory, along with appropriate metadata.

To increase discoverability of federal data assets, the Committee recommends that the NSDS should coordinate with the ICSP and the Chief Data Officer Council to support a seamless experience for users accessing various federal data inventories.

NSDS Functions: Coordination—Support a High-Quality User Experience, Including Providing Technical Assistance (NSDS Website as a “Front Door”)

The design of the NSDS should include the ability for users to identify a question domain (and subdomain) as needed or a specific agency, and be redirected to a list of relevant data assets. Upon selection of a data asset, users would be directed to existing public-facing engines, or, if needed, the SAP portal.

NSDS Functions: Coordination—Support a High-Quality User Experience, Including Providing Technical Assistance (NSDS Data Concierges)

Clarifying the initial research question, including referring the user as appropriate to existing and available data assets that could meet the user’s need (e.g., data assets as part of the SAP). This requires Data Concierges to have knowledge of existing SAP data sets, access to SAP metadata, and understand the physical and computational security requirements of the SAP data sets.

Curating a catalog of agency data assets that are not part of the SAP but that may be relevant to the user’s request (e.g., administrative and operational data sets).

Discussion questions

Should the recommendations reference an integrated data “catalog” instead of an integrated data “inventory?”

Is what’s recommended for the NSDS different than the federal data catalog?

- If yes, how so? And how do the different catalogs fit together?
- If no, is the Committee suggesting that the NSDS has the responsibility for the federal data catalog? Currently, that responsibility belongs to GSA.

Forthcoming CIPSEA Regulations and Guidance: SAP Evolution—Technical Assistance

As a start, the SAP will include agency points-of-contact so that users can inquire about specific data sets and uses; however, there is a larger need for data concierge services that connect users to the right data and assist with developing project proposals. The NSDS could offer technical assistance like this, acting as a coordinator between data users and data providers.

Forthcoming CIPSEA Regulations and Guidance: SAP Evolution— Expanded Scope

ICSP could expand the SAP process to be the mechanism through which data users apply to access confidential data assets envisioned as part of the NSDS—whether those data are non-public assets of statistical agencies, programmatic data acquired by statistical agencies from other federal agencies through the Presumption of Accessibility, or administrative data provided by state and local governments for their own or others' evidence-building needs.

NSDS Technical Infrastructure and Tools: Needs

NSDS administrators need an auditable record of the provenance of which data sets were used for which evidence-building analyses

NSDS data contributors need tools to manage their inventories, requests, users, and outputs.

Data users need a point of entry; the ability to search and discover data...

Data users need a proposal submission system...

NSDS Technical Infrastructure and Tools: Accessibility

To support the discovery of data assets for evidence building, the NSDS should provide a technological process to support access to searchable and discoverable data, request data access, track the approval process, and document outcomes of the process, in line with the Standard Application Process.

NSDS Functions: Introduction

The NSDS must also use the SAP as the approval access for restricted-use data sets.

NSDS Functions: Coordination—Support a High-Quality User Experience, Including Providing Technical Assistance (NSDS Website as a “Front Door”)

The intake process could be an expanded version of the SAP.

Alternative text: The user experience should be intentionally designed to integrate with the SAP, should users need to access confidential data assets housed there.

Discussion questions

Is the SAP part of the NSDS broad coordination function? In other words, does SAP become part of the NSDS? If yes,

- What responsibility would the NSDS Operating Entity (that is, a contractor) have for the SAP?
- How is this different than how the SAP Program Management Office works now?

Or is the SAP a separate function that the NSDS must use/coordinate with?

Key findings

- Diverse stakeholder groups must have meaningful mechanisms to provide strategic direction, operational guidance, and technical advice for the NSDS.
- Key groups include policy setters, user communities, and technical advisors—including federal statistical agencies, other federal agencies, officials, and councils; state and local governments; professional societies; community organizations; the research community; and privacy, cybersecurity, ethics, and legal experts.
- Under existing NCSES legal frameworks, stakeholders cannot advise contractors directly. That is, they cannot make resource decisions (e.g., on staffing, spending, or scope of work).

Key findings

- There must be a mechanism for user communities and technical advisors to provide flexible and timely operational input and technical advice to the NSDS contractor (that is, the “Operating Entity”).
- The NSDS operating contract can be written with clauses that allow the Operating Entity to convene ad hoc working groups for targeted operational guidance and technical advice.
- The NCSES Program Management Office, specifically the contracting officer (or representative), would direct the Operating Entity to implement the changes.
- A more formal relationship in which stakeholder groups provide input directly to the Operating Entity (not requiring PMO for implementation) would require a law change.

Key findings

- The organizational structure and governance for the NSDS will need to evolve over time with changes in technology, the legal environment, full implementation of CIPSEA 2018, public expectations, and lessons learned.
- A phased implementation approach, informed by targeted pilot projects, is critical for standing up pieces of the structure.
- A legal change that allows stakeholders to advise contractors directly could be implemented as part of this phased approach.

Discussion questions

Do these findings reflect the full Committee's information gathering and discussions?

To get the right input from the right stakeholders at the right time:

- Is it effective for (1) governance bodies to advise NCSES and then (2) have a contract mechanism for delivering timely, targeted operational and technical advice to the Operating Entity (with changes implemented through the PMO)?
- If not, is a phased implementation approach that allows for a new legal mechanism appropriate? Why or why not?

Discussion questions

What's the actionable and relevant level of detail to describe the governing bodies?

- At the level of the findings presented earlier?
- Is it helpful to describe specific components—the Policy Steering Committee, the User Advisory Board, and the Research and Technical Advisory Board?
- What about detail on composition of the bodies, selection, legal and structural requirements, and roles and responsibilities?

Designated Funding Stream for Federal Evidence-Building Activities

The OMB Director should request funding and authority in the FY 2024 Budget Request for a new interagency budget account with transfer authority to support Evidence Act Implementation.

Evidence and findings

- Increasingly, agencies have shared or cross-agency evidence and data needs or priorities.
- Funding these types of initiatives can be challenging.
- A shared interagency fund can help mitigate such limitations.
- Examples for a dedicated funding stream include: (1) Technology Modernization Fund and (2) Evidence Incentive Fund.

Resources for State, Territorial, Local, and Tribal Governments

The OMB Director should propose in the FY 2024 Budget Request a new \$1 billion block grant for state, territorial, local, and tribal funding to support cross-program data infrastructure improvements and data modernization.

Evidence and findings

- The lack of resources, capacity, and technical capability at the state/local levels hinders evidence-building activities.
- There is a need for a better two-way data flow—sending data “up” to the feds and getting data back “down” for decisionmaking.
- Existing funding mechanisms include: (1) NCHS NVSS modernization, (2) DOL Data Equity Partnerships, and (3) OMB memo that authorizes infrastructure money for data infrastructures
- No single existing mechanism is likely to address capacity gaps.

Outstanding Items: What's Next?

- Incorporate feedback from this session
- Address remaining items
 - Where feasible, add/tweak text to (1) align with other sections of the report and (2) root to existing ecosystem and CIPSEA legal framework
 - If connections are unclear, may provide less specificity (e.g., focus on principles vs. specific approach)
 - May shift detail to appendix
 - Cut content that is inconsistent, too detailed, not supported by adequate evidence, or not connected to the ecosystem/CIPSEA framework