Design Considerations for Implementing a National Secure Data Service

Federal Advisory Committee on Data for Evidence Building
April 23, 2021
Summary

- Review nuanced approaches for a service based on specified criteria
- Recommend a new FFDRC via the National Science Foundation
- Identify administrative approaches for implementation, in addition to key questions for further review
Changes and Reforms Since 2017

- **Evidence Act (PL 115-435)** including CIPSEA expansions & OPEN Government Data Act
  - Presumption of accessibility
  - Common portal
  - Data inventory requirements
  - Consideration of level of sensitivity
- **Federal Data Strategy & Annual Action Plan**
- **OMB Guidance:**
  - IQA (M-19-15)
  - Evidence Act Phase 1 (M-19-23)
  - Evaluation Guidance (M-20-12)
Value Proposition for 2021+

**Thematic**
- Pandemic response
- Economic mobility and opportunity
- Social equity

**Technical**
- Replication
- Efficient research extensions

“In the 21st century, there is no reason why government should not be able to support the production of rapid and routine insights that inform how resources are spent addressing society’s greatest challenges.”
Necessary Attributes of a Data Service

1. Transparency and Trust
2. Legal authority to protect privacy and confidentiality
3. Independence
4. Legal authority to collect data from agencies
5. Scalable functionality
6. Sustainability
7. Oversight and accountability
8. Intergovernmental support
Four NSDS Organizational Options

1. New statistical agency within Commerce
2. Re-tasked agency within Commerce
3. New public-private partnership within NSF
4. University-based
## Weighing the Four Options

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options →</th>
<th>New Agency at Commerce</th>
<th>Re-task Agency at Commerce</th>
<th>PP/RC at NSF</th>
<th>Public-Private Partnership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attributes</strong></td>
<td>Transparency and Public Trust</td>
<td>Create new mechanisms, co-opt existing approaches from Census and BIA, and be covered by SP01.</td>
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<td>Create new mechanisms, leverage Research Statistics (NBER) and federal statistical principles and practices and be covered by SP01 through NBER.</td>
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<td>Legal Authority for Privacy Protections</td>
<td>CIPSEA-eligible Privacy Act Ad hoc use limitations</td>
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<td>Independence</td>
<td>Subject to some Commerce Secretarial discretion and independent body oversight. May be at risk of political interference and prioritizing Commerce activities instead of interagency priorities.</td>
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<td>Quasi-independent, subject to some NSF Director discretion and independent oversight body. Less likelihood of being prioritized for NSF activities.</td>
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<td>Ability to Access and Acquire Data</td>
<td>Yes, within CIPSEA framework</td>
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<td>Scalable and Timely</td>
<td>Yes, but would navigate existing business processes at Commerce. Likely slow development.</td>
<td>Yes, but would navigate existing business processes at Commerce. Likely slow development.</td>
<td>Yes, working with flexible NSF business processes. Allows for rapid development, particularly for acquiring capacity and skilled workforce.</td>
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<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Can be funded by existing Commerce budget accounts. May experience funding competition with other Commerce activities.</td>
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<td>Oversight and Accountability</td>
<td>Subject to GAO, IG, and congressional committee oversight. Additional interactions from governing board and its advisory committees.</td>
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<td>Inter-Governmental Cooperation</td>
<td>Would need to establish new relationships, building on some existing Census partnerships, may jeopardize some existing cooperation among state and local governments.</td>
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Roadmap for the FFRDC at NSF

- Administratively pursue an **FFRDC** at NSF under current law, with expectations beyond FAR minimum requirements
- **Responsibility** within NSF in conjunction with the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES), an existing federal statistical agency with CIPSEA designation
- Full **transparency** about proposed and ongoing projects, and their value
- **Accountability** should include review by GAO and NSF IG
Roadmap for the FFRDC at NSF (cont’d)

- **EOP support** for NSF role via Executive Action, in conjunction with ICSP, CDO Council, ICEP
- **Competitive** award process with clearly-delineated criteria for 5-year contract award
- Establishment of a governance **board** for guidance, strategic planning, and auditing
- **CIPSEA** designation as an agency or agent
- Produce government-wide **learning agenda**, based on individual agency plans published in 2022
Questions for the ACDEB

- **Value** – what types of analytic services, strategies for engagement and user feedback, approaches for quality, prioritization of projects?
- **Organization** – how to best ensure NSDS fits into the current and future ecosystem, including the role of FSRDCs?
- **Sustainability** – what level of resources are needed, how to approach fees/reimbursable arrangements?
- **Measurement and Accountability** – what additional oversight mechanisms, transparency requirements, archiving policies?
If evidence-based policymaking is to truly succeed ... the American people must retain public trust in the system that serves their interests, protects their information, and advances policies that improve their quality of live, economy, and society.”

– Hart and Potok, 2020