
Meeting 10 Notes and Actions
July 23, 2021

Next Meeting: August 20, 2021 (9 AM - Noon (EDT))

Meeting Agenda:

1. Coordinating Committee: NSDS Vision with Committee Discussion – Nicholas Hart, Anna Hui, and Committee Discussion
2. Subcommittee Report: Legislation and Regulations with Committee Discussion – Nicholas Hart, Christine Heflin, and Committee Discussion
3. Subcommittee Report: Government Data for Evidence-Building with Committee Discussion – Anna Hui, Kenneth Troske, and Committee Discussion
4. Coordinating Committee: Decision-making Standards and Case Study Criteria Matrix with Committee Discussion – Laila Alequersh, Matthew Soldner, Emilda Rivers, and Committee Discussion
5. Next Steps – Emilda Rivers and Committee Discussion

I. Coordinating Committee: NSDS Vision with Committee Discussion – Nicholas Hart, Anna Hui, and Committee Discussion

Representatives of the Coordinating Committee provided their views of the NSDS vision for discussion. The key aspects of the vision they noted include:

- The basic framework for the NSDS as envisioned by the Evidence Commission serves as a starting point to build upon
- While envisioned as an entity, it should be a principle, place, and service – we should remain open to all possible ways to structure it
- The NSDS should supplement rather than displace the existing ecosystem
- No single service will fulfill all needs, so the Committee may want to suggest a federated or coordinated model
- A design framework for integrating with state and local government support is needed
- Activities the NSDS can support include leadership, transparency, integration, innovation, technical support, and intergovernmental cooperation

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

Committee Feedback/Discussions:

→ **Coordinated Activity**

- Components of the activities may sit in different places, with different structures and locations, but it will be important for it to be coordinated in some manner
- The Committee can pursue multiple streams at once and explore multiple models in tandem; it just cannot happen in silos

- Even if different functions operate as separate components, there will need to be a coordinating function to resolve competing priorities and resource needs

→ **Minimum Viable Requirements**

- Rather than develop the end-state programs, the Committee can think in terms of minimum requirements and functionalities and then layer in innovation
- Can borrow ideas from existing activities rather than reinvent

→ **Chief Statistician as Chief Communicator**

- Filling the Chief Statistician office is a top priority as that role can be critical for communicating NSDS values and principles
- Communication will be an agenda item for the Other Services subcommittee, and they will report back on it to the full Committee

→ **Next Step: Vision Paper**

- To move forward, the Coordinating Committee will begin drafting a paper describing the vision, weaving together the ideas from the various subcommittees
- The vision may be organized around NSDS functions

II. Subcommittee Report: Legislation and Regulations with Committee Discussion – Nicholas Hart, Christine Heflin, and Committee Discussion

The co-chairs for the Legislation and Regulations subcommittee provided an overview of the focus area's scope. They noted that their mission is to build support for legislative and regulatory change and that case studies will serve an integral role in achieving that goal. The downside of privacy breaches is apparent to legislators; the Committee needs compelling stories to communicate the upside of data sharing in evidence building. Case studies should include ones with state government partnerships. The subcommittee's scope includes looking at statutory changes as well as leveraging existing authorities.

Topical areas they will look at further include:

- Creating broader data sharing requests which permit multiple analyses under one approval
- Developing model state policies
- Drafting standard contract language covering privacy and data sharing for contractors who create or maintain data

Some potential quick wins they have identified include OMB guidance that reinforces “open data by default,” OMB guidance that allows states to share data collected under federal programs, creating accessible briefing materials on current authorities and flexibility in sharing data, and encouraging standard language for data sharing MOUs.

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

Committee Feedback/Discussions:

→ **Additional Guidance or New Legislation**

- While additional guidance may help in some areas, the Committee also needs to be open to new legislation and needs to look carefully at issues such as those related to Title 13, Title 26, and CIPSEA
- The Committee should consider recommending standardized language on System of Records Notices as they come up for renewal since standardized record identifiers can be critical in using data for evidence building
- Consider recommending standardized language on routine use which attorneys will understand and will help facilitate tiered access and broader usage

→ **Treating Users Like Feds**

- Should consider if the law ought to treat users of data the same as employees when it comes to data disclosure
- As it stands, the federal agency is always held accountable even for user breaches which makes them naturally conservative in making data accessible
- This may be a critical step in facilitating tiered access

→ **Highlight Role of States**

- States collect a good portion of federal data in their administration of federal programs
- There is a laboratory of 50 states where different approaches can be tested to show the value for different access models
- For example, the Midwest Collaborative is currently testing different technology for tiered access; the NSDS can serve as a clearinghouse for identifying and communicating these experiments

III. Subcommittee Report: Government Data for Evidence-Building with Committee Discussion – Anna Hui, Kenneth Troske, and Committee Discussion

The co-chairs for the Government Data for Evidence-Building subcommittee provided an overview of the focus area's scope. Their purview is to provide ways to get data into a system and facilitate access to government data. A lot of data is flowing in from state and local governments, and the Committee needs to think about the person collecting the data in a disaggregated setting and what can be done to better facilitate that data flow into the federal data system in a way that ensures good data for evidence building. Questions to explore include: How to get data into the system? How to help build data provider capacity? And how to help train the data collectors? Need to account for the human element in data collection and help develop a consistent understanding across the whole system.

Potential quick wins in the area include recommending areas where additional guidance is needed from OMB to ensure consistent interpretations on what is allowed and using existing research that spans federal and state organizations to look at barriers encountered at the

federal, state, and local levels.

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

Committee Feedback/Discussions:

→ **UI System as Pilot**

- The unemployment insurance system offers a ripe pilot opportunity given its decentralized structure and the current value of data analysis in light of the pandemic benefits and extended unemployment
- It requires a broad-ranging conversation spanning states and multiple federal agencies and programs to ensure consistency across states and federal programs

→ **Evaluation is Program Administration**

- Recent OMB Memo (M-21-27) provides a strong statement on evaluation and its role in government; it highlights that evaluation is program administration and thus inherently provides programmatic value
- The memo provides a great starting point for articulating how evaluation can be used for statistical purposes
- Timeliness of evaluation is critical; want to evaluate as programs are developed and administered for early warning signals. NSDS can help provide a platform for timely evaluation

IV. Coordinating Committee: Decision-making Standards and Case Study Criteria Matrix with Committee Discussion – Laila Alequersh, Matthew Soldner, Emilda Rivers, and Committee Discussion

In the first presentation, the Coordinating Committee outlined a general, transparent, principles-based model for decision-making in both the full Committee and subcommittees. The aim of the model is to give equal voice to all perspectives allowing the Committee to get full value from the wide range of expertise of its members. The basic approach is that for decisions between two or more options each individual Committee member will rank order their choices based upon a set of shared, mutually agreed-upon criteria with the most favorably ranked option overall prevailing. Criteria will be decided upon as a group prior to the ranking, and the criteria can vary depending on the nature of the decision.

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

Committee Feedback/Discussions:

→ **Unequal Criteria Weight**

- Criteria should not necessarily all have the same weights in individuals' rankings
- Additionally, the criteria and relative weights might vary depending on the issue being discussed

→ **Opportunity for Discussion**

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- It is recommended that, rather than use the first ranking alone, there should be discussion after the initial ranking to understand the different perspectives, intensity of belief, and see if a consensus can be reached

In the second presentation, the Chair introduced a case study criteria matrix that can help in identifying projects to feature in the Committee's work. The case studies will cover three cross-cutting themes:

1. Demonstrate the value of a National Secure Data Service
2. Establish a systematic approach toward privacy
3. Promote incremental progress with quick wins for near-term progress that build toward longer-term objectives

The matrix looks at the major challenges to evidence-based decision-making and the mechanisms for showing external validity by connecting to authoritative sources. The "best" case studies should both address existing challenges and provide timely, relevant responses to outside priorities.

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

Committee Feedback/Discussions:

- **Not a Perfect Fit**
 - Not all case studies will fit neatly into the mechanism, which appears to be designed from the perspective of the federal ecosystem
- **Different Types of Case Studies**
 - While this framework views case studies as demonstrating solutions, it was suggested that case studies can also be used to tell the stories of specific research projects and the barriers they faced that need to be overcome more broadly

VI. Next Steps

In upcoming meetings, Committee will hear additional progress reports from the Coordinating Committee and the Focus Area subcommittees (who will start holding standing meetings) and will discuss an outline and approach for the Year 1 report.

August

Initial reports from the Governance, Technical Infrastructure, and Other Services focus areas and discussion of the Year 1 Report