Priorities for the Federal Statistical System

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COPAFS, March 5, 2021

System-Wide Priorities

Federal statistical agencies need—

- ✓ Legislation to bolster independence from political interference; penalize data users for breaches of data confidentiality; and eliminate barriers to sharing of data among agencies
- ✓ Increased staffing and resources to support innovation and blending of data from multiple sources (e.g., surveys, administrative records)
- ✓ Strengthened federal statistics oversight, support for collaboration, and research on system-wide needs, all in the service of higher quality, more relevant statistics

System-Wide Priorities

Strengthen the statistical system as a whole—*to enhance coordination, collaboration, and utility*

- ✓ Increase currently limited staff and budget resources available to the US Chief Statistician for the support of information policy activities that enable collaboration among statistical agencies and leverage data assets, protect confidentiality, and enhance quality

- ✓ Elevate the position of the Chief Statistician—for example, to a second Deputy Administrator position in OIRA—to better support coordination among the statistical agencies, establish a stronger evidence-based policymaking effort in the administration, and reflect the broad portfolio, responsibilities, and profile of the Chief Statistician

System-Wide Priorities

Strengthen the statistical system (cont'd)

- ✓ Task the ICSP to develop ways to improve awareness of the resources and capabilities of the federal statistical system within and outside of the federal government

- ✓ Task agencies to coordinate and integrate statistical programs across agencies when appropriate to provide the most relevant data for policy and other uses

- ✓ Fully support requirements associated with the Evidence Act and Federal Data Strategy

System-Wide Priorities

Strengthen federal statistical agencies' staffing and funding

✓ Address federal statistical agency staffing shortfalls by increasing allocation of permanent staff, by developing skills of current staff in areas needed to take advantage of emerging opportunities, and by hiring people with the needed skills

✓ Fully support the mission of the federal statistical system by increasing budget allocations

System-Wide Priorities

Improve data quality, relevance, and utility

✓ Task agencies to enhance outreach and partnerships with non-statistical agencies and state and local governments

✓ Provide resources for state and local governments to modernize and standardize their data systems and take other steps to increase the utility of their data for use by the statistical agencies

✓ Task agencies and provide resources for them to improve survey response rates to increase efficiency, improve accuracy, and decrease bias

✓ Provide resources for agencies to develop linked data sets that combine survey data with administrative or other non-survey data and standard ways to measure and communicate the quality of the resulting blended data

System-Wide Priorities

Balance data access & respondent privacy

✓ Improve secure research access to confidential data by establishing a secure data service, as proposed in the Evidence Act, to carry out linkages of data sets for statistical, research, and policy evaluation purposes

✓ Amend the Evidence Act to impose penalties on users (including other federal agencies and their contractors) for willful breaches of confidentiality and uses of statistical data for nonstatistical purposes, such as law enforcement actions against individuals.

✓ Add language to the Evidence Act that charges federal statistical agencies and units, which already face penalties for disclosure of confidential information, to appropriately balance confidentiality protection and utility and accuracy of statistical data

System-Wide Priorities

Strengthen trust, credibility, and autonomy

✓ Strengthen the trust, credibility, and political autonomy of all statistical agencies through legislation, as appropriate, OMB statistical policy directives, departmental MOUs with constituent statistical agencies, and support for the Statistical Official in each department

✓ For example, amend the Evidence Act to—
   ▪ protect statistical agency scientists and prohibit political appointees other than the agency head
   ▪ more fully incorporate the principles in *Statistical Policy Directive No. 1*, particularly on statistical agency autonomy

System-Wide Priorities

Links to ASA documents

ASA Press Release—

Building Back Our Nation's Data Infrastructure: Professional associations urge bolstering of federal statistical agencies, [1/27/212021-PrioritiesRelease.pdf (amstat.org)](#)

ASA Resources for Policy Makers—

Priorities for 2021 Congress and Administration (system-wide, BEA, BJS, BLS, BTS, ERS, NASS, NCES, NCHS, NCSES, U.S. Census Bureau), [Science Policy and Advocacy (amstat.org)](#)

AmstatNews Article—

ASA, COPAFS, Partners Urge Bolstering of Federal Statistics, [ASA, COPAFS, Partners Urge Bolstering of Federal Statistical Agencies | Amstat News](#) [3/1/2021]