

Federal Statistical Agency Priorities – Roundtable Discussion

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COPAFS

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Bureau of Justice Statistics

Mission: Collect, analyze, publish information on crime, criminal offenders, victims of crime, and operations of justice systems at all levels of government

Established 1979 under the Justice Systems Improvement Act of 1979

Current **statistics** cover: corrections, courts, federal processing of crime, indicators of crime, Indian country justice, justice employment & expenditures, law enforcement, victims

Supports criminal justice **data improvement** projects: National Criminal History, National Instant Criminal Background Check System, State Justice Systems, NIBRS

BJS – Data to Keep our Communities Safe

Create a strong leadership structure

- Restore Senate confirmation of the BJS Director & change to a fixed term, staggered across election years to ensure
 - A highly qualified leader
 - A strong voice within the Department of Justice for timely, objective, relevant data releases
 - A credible voice among the disparate data providers (~60 national statistical programs and 50,000+ criminal justice agencies)
- Reinstate SES career level status to the Principal Deputy Director position

BJS – Data to Keep our Communities Safe

Re-invigorate existing & develop new strategic partnerships

- Reengage with the Federal Statistical System
 - actively participate on the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy and with Evidence Act activities
- Revitalize partnerships with key DOJ agencies, such a
 - Federal Bureau of Investigation, Office of Victims of Crime, Bureau of Prisons, Office of Violence Against Women, National Institute of Justice, and others to improve and support data collection activities
- Develop strategic partnerships
 - With state & local justice agencies, academic institutions (criminal justice, statistics, data science) to support modernization efforts

BJS – Data to Keep our Communities Safe

Modernize & strengthen processes for:

› Data collections, acquisitions and linkages

- Develop a 5-year R&D plan to assess: current coverage and gaps in data, methodologies to improve measures of crime, feasibility & fitness of use of new/alternative data sources, including administrative and open source, other data sources for linkage/integration with BJS data, and practical ways to implement

› Data communication, publication and dissemination

- Develop & adhere to a data release and publication schedule
- Reduce existing backlog
- Move to a digital first strategy for data and report access, including, data visualizations, maps, dashboards, APIs, etc.

BJS – Data to Keep our Communities Safe

Sustained focus to grow:

› Budget

- Address decade long chronic shortfalls. FY10: \$59.M FY21: \$36.6M
- Bolster ability to meet separately with OMB and Congress

› Staff

- Cultivate and build upon current staff skills in criminal justice & statistics
- Grow staff size and expand skills (data science, digital communication, project management, leadership...)

BJS – Data to Keep our Communities Safe

Recommit to principles & practices:

- Relevance to policy issues
- Credibility among data users
- Trust among data providers
- Independence from political influence

Reinstitute culture of transparency & engagement

- Establish an advisory board with FACA status

Thank You

Comments, questions,
discussion?

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The Bureau of Justice Statistics

- faces some big challenges
- has huge potential
- needs attention & support

BJS must play a bigger role in providing the data needed to make sound policy decisions about how to keep our communities safe.