

Meeting 11 Notes and Actions

August 20, 2021

Next Meeting: September 17, 2021 (9 AM - Noon (EDT))

Meeting Agenda:

1. Subcommittee Report: Governance, Transparency, and Accountability with Committee Discussion – Charles Cutshall, Julia Lane, and Committee Discussion
2. Subcommittee Report: Other Services and Capacity-Building Opportunities with Committee Discussion – Kimberly Murnieks, Matthew Soldner, and Committee Discussion
3. Subcommittee Report: Technical Infrastructure with Committee Discussion – Amy O’Hara, David Park, and Committee Discussion
4. Year 1 Report Planning with Committee Discussion – Avi Alpert and Committee Discussion

I. Subcommittee Report: Governance, Transparency, and Accountability with Committee Discussion – Charles Cutshall, Julia Lane, and Committee Discussion

The co-chairs for the Governance, Transparency, and Accountability subcommittee provided a report of the focus area’s progress to date. Their approach began with a crosswalk to the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking’s (CEP) recommendations and the Hart-Potok report. They noted that Hart-Potok evaluated 4 possible structures for the NSDS against 8 governance attributes and recommended that the Committee use the same attributes while adding a fifth potential structure, a hybrid structure between an FFRDC and an entity residing in a federal statistical agency.

For the first year report, they will ground the assessment in two use cases, derived from site visits, which cover individual level records at both the state and federal levels:

- Education and Workforce Data
- Health Data

The assessment of the use cases will cover the framework, operations, and implementation.

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

Committee Feedback/Discussions:

→ **The Hybrid Structure**

- The notion is to get the best aspects of both a public-private partnership in an FFRDC and a statistical agency, so you do not lose the speed advantage of an FFRDC and the CIPSEA protection of a statistical agency
- The Committee should look at the origins of recent FFRDCs and the legal framework between them and the agencies they are connected to

- ACDEB also should look at the different governance models particularly between those with an external administrator (like Mitre) and those without one
- **Agency Mandates**
 - It may be possible to achieve the speed wholly in a statistical agency if the mandates are accompanied by appropriate resourcing – something that should be considered in Committee recommendations
 - Agency mandates can also influence activities in FFRDCs which may interfere with the broader role a national data service would be playing
- **Facilitating Federal/State Partnership**
 - Another potential advantage with a hybrid approach is how it can facilitate the partnership between federal and state governments
 - It may be easier in a hybrid structure to provide resources to the states and maintain easier fund flows

II. Subcommittee Report: Other Services and Capacity-Building Opportunities with Committee Discussion – Kimberly Murnieks, Matthew Soldner, and Committee Discussion

The co-chairs for the Other Services and Capacity-Building Opportunities subcommittee provided a report of the focus area’s progress to date. They noted that their scope is to ensure that users can make best use of NSDS services. To support that, they are honing in on two equal branches of work:

1. *Technical Assistance*: Providing the training, coaching, and technical support needed to use the services both within the NSDS and to the data owners, including state and local entities
2. *Communications*: Communicating the capabilities and value of the service, in a tailored manner, to citizens, policymakers at all levels of government, and researchers

For each branch, they intend to make recommendations both on **what** needs to be accomplished and **how** to do it. For both Technical Assistance and Communications, they have identified four activities they would recommend with two recommendations on what is needed to achieve them.

They noted that the Year 1 report is the initial communication vehicle, and it should be seen by the Committee in that light.

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

Committee Feedback/Discussions:

- **The Data Concierge**
 - The Committee should look at data concierges within the FSRDC network to determine if they have yielded an appropriate benefit

- The thought is the data concierge serves as the “librarian” who understands the metadata and the universe of available data and can liaise with the data experts themselves to connect users to the most appropriate data for their needs

→ **Communication Begins Now**

- The Year 1 report will be the initial communication to a variety of audiences
- As the first big splash, ACDEB should think about how to communicate about the report and incorporate mechanisms for engaging audiences with it and gather feedback from them
- It is critical that the Committee communicates what it is doing in a way that broadens the audience and emphasizes the need for evidence-building

→ **Stakeholder Analysis and Your Champions**

- Communications starts with an analysis of various stakeholders and audience groups so communication can be tailored to their needs
- ACDEB needs to identify champions through early engagement, not just talking about the value proposition, but spokespeople who will evangelize for it within different distinct audience groups
- For example, the Midwest Collaborative is currently testing different technology for tiered access; the NSDS can serve as clearinghouse for identifying and communicating these experiments

III. Subcommittee Report: Technical Infrastructure with Committee Discussion – Amy O’Hara, David Park, and Committee Discussion

The co-chairs for the Technical Infrastructure subcommittee provided a report of the focus area’s progress to date. The subcommittee discussed the need for data to be accessible and have clear terms to facilitate data sharing and evidence building. A single, monolithic infrastructure is unlikely to satisfy all use cases, particularly since future use cases are not known. Instead, infrastructure needs to be flexible and adaptable. It will also need to be able to support both data contributors and data users, which means there will need to be standards both for the systems to facilitate interoperability and for the data definitions.

In terms of sequencing, specific technical requirements will need to follow legal and governance recommendations. So, the subcommittee will focus first on what it can recommend generally and only discuss specific technical requirements when there is more clarity coming out of other subcommittees.

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

Committee Feedback/Discussions:

→ **Creating Standards**

- Today, there is no coherent process for determining when data standards are needed; Congress has established how standards are set in some instances, and the Chief Statistician has a role in it as well
 - The Committee also should consider when and how to include standards set by industry groups
 - EPA has a long history working with a consortium of states to develop consensus around standards for challenging data; they find that collaboration and communication is essential
 - The subcommittee is not planning to focus on what the standards should be but the mechanisms by which they can be determined
- **Integrating Across Focus Areas**
- There are many areas that cross subcommittee lines and they need to be parsed out and deconflicted
 - The Coordinating Committee is going focus on ensuring cross-cutting issues are being addressed in the right places

IV. Year 1 Report Planning with Committee Discussion – Avi Alpert and Committee Discussion

The focus of the Year 1 report is to convey actionable, near-term recommendations to OMB while laying out an agenda for Year 2. The report will have chapters for each focus area and the Committee’s vision for an NSDS. It will set out the environmental foundation and fact base upon which the Committee has built its findings and recommendations.

The drafting process has begun with each subcommittee and will be a collaborative, iterative process between Avi and each focus area. The core content will come from the Committee members, and the report will incorporate a feedback mechanism to inform Year 2 efforts.

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

Committee Feedback/Discussions:

- **Incorporating the Fact Base**
- ACDEB spent 6 months listening to presentations from the experts on this Committee across domains; the Committee should be sure that foundation is covered in the report
- **Consensus**
- There is an open question on what the Committee will be using for consensus on recommendations
 - If asking for 100 percent agreement, will ACDEB be able to make definitive recommendations; is some level of majority a better threshold?
 - This is something that the Coordinating Committee will discuss
- **Use Cases**

- Use cases will be used in the report to illuminate findings and recommendations
- While use cases are helpful in communicating the story arc, they are not intended to constrain the report to only what can be tied to a use case. Nor is the Committee limited to use cases already identified; each subcommittee can pull in the appropriate use cases or snippets of use cases to support their focus area

→ **Iterative Process**

- The report development will be an iterative process between Avi and the subcommittees
- There will be ongoing interaction over the next two months to work towards the report

VI. Next Steps

The subcommittees and Coordinating Committee will continue developing the material for the Year 1 report and laying out a path for Year 2. They will consider it as a phased approach, identifying obvious areas where the Committee can have actionable recommendations now and outlining what to focus on moving forward.

September

The Committee will continue hearing report-outs from focus areas and discuss the Year 1 report.