The State of Our Federal Statistical Union: Challenges Continue, but Opportunities Abound

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The views expressed in this presentation do not represent changes in OMB policy.
Informed decisions require data

• Our democracy and economy demand unbiased, relevant, credible, and timely data.

• Current challenges provide the opportunity to strengthen, even reinvent, how the Federal statistical system provides official statistics.
A “perfect storm” for Federal statistics

- Budget constraints
- Human capital
- Confidentiality and privacy concerns
- Respondent cooperation
- “Casual” statistics offered by entrepreneurs
A “perfect storm” for Federal statistics

• Providers of official statistics may be tempted to resist these pressures, owing to concerns for data quality and confidentiality.

• Not an option if we are to meet our mandate and respond to the needs of our broadened user base.
Opportunities in every challenge

• It’s an exciting time for the Federal statistical system!
• These challenges give us the incentive and policy support to try new things.
• By embracing these challenges, we can advance the system overall.
Commitment to evidence-based policy

• Examples:
  – Program Evaluation Initiative
  – Health Care Quality and Cost Effectiveness Initiative
  – Scientific Integrity Initiative
Insatiable appetite for information

• Visions of how to better use technology and data capture the public’s imagination.

• The public wants data
  – in a form that is timely, transparent, and flexible
  – to make personal and business decisions
  – to inform public policy.
Think different(ly)

• We have thought of data as a product to be accessed and analyzed by trained professionals who offer their interpretations (often) through a peer review process.

• If data are thought of as a product from and for the public to use to make personal, business and public policy decisions, what would that mean to Federal statistical practice?
Salient timeless principles

• Relevance
• Practical utility
• Credibility
• Public trust
• Commitment to quality
• Wide dissemination
Try new things

• Explore “fitness for use,” to allocate resources to areas where high precision is necessary

• Explore use of administrative records to improve timeliness of data

• Facilitate transparency by creating metadata

• Harness innovative ways to make data available to users
New stakeholders

• Take advantage of the energy of this information age to reinvent how we collect, analyze, store, and disseminate data.

• Utilize this broader user group to bring expertise to augment and enhance the Federal statistical system.

  ➢ A broader, more active user base can mean our value is more widely recognized.