

Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics

Advancing Excellence in Federal Statistics

The Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics (COPAFS) was founded in 1981 to coordinate activities of a number of Associations, Organizations, and Businesses that rely on federal statistics to support good governance and economic growth. COPAFS now represents over 300,000 individual researchers, educators, public health professionals, civic groups, and businesses that support the production and use of high quality federal statistics.

The members of COPAFS bring significant resources to support the COPAFS mission of *Advancing Excellence in Federal Statistics*. Federal statistical data are critical national resources. The uses of these data are central to our democracy and include: supporting Constitutional mandates such as reapportionment of the House of Representatives and redrawing Congressional Districts; allocating hundreds of billions of government dollars annually; supporting good planning and execution at all levels of federal, state, local and tribal governments; describing our Nation's economic wellbeing; providing guidance to solve critical problems such as opioid addiction; informing public and private decision making leading to job creation and improved infrastructure; and creating opportunities for local communities to have the information they need to thrive and grow.

Federal Statistics Face Critical Challenges

The COPAFS mission to support the production and use of federal statistical data is growing in importance. The Federal Government must overcome significant challenges in order to continue producing high quality statistical data. Federal statistics rely on censuses, sample surveys and administrative records. However, survey response rates are declining and survey costs are rising. Data users increasingly demand more timely and granular information, such as at the city rather than national level. Statistical agencies are moving to take advantage of new technologies and data sources to reduce costs while maintaining high quality and reliability.

Compounding these challenges is the lack of sufficient funding for statistical agencies, which has been widespread and ongoing for a number of budget cycles and was particularly acute in Fiscal Years 2017 and 2018. The agencies have been forced to delay critical hiring, reduce the amount of data that they collect and disseminate, and put innovative research on hold. Without a course correction, the ultimate result will be a deterioration in the high quality statistics that so many decision-makers rely on to make critical choices that affect people in every community across our Nation.

Most urgent is the situation of the 2020 Census and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. With respect to the 2020 decennial census, there is an immediate need for sufficient funding to assure an accurate census. Since 2012, the Census Bureau has been underfunded by over \$200 million from its requests to congressional appropriators for 2020 decennial census research and development. The Census Bureau has been conducting a research program to modernize the 2020 census, taking advantage of mobile technology, new geospatial tools, and allowing self-response over the Internet. This research will lead to significant savings relative to repeating the 2010 census processes for 2020. However, the shortfall

in funding has forced the Census Bureau to delay planning and early operational activities for the advertising and partnership programs necessary to achieve a high quality enumeration for all populations groups and areas. A significant funding increase is essential in Fiscal Year 2019 to allow the Census Bureau to put in place the critical infrastructure and operations that will result in a complete and accurate enumeration in 2020. The risk of undercounting the hard-to-enumerate populations has been growing and a lack of adequate funding in FY2019 will result a census that does not fairly represent these groups. The underfunding also has forced the Census Bureau to defer efforts to modernize both building a high quality address list and enumerating rural areas. These deferrals will increase costs considerably.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is also facing a serious budget situation. Since 2009 the appropriated budget for BLS has fallen 11.5 percent in real dollars for Fiscal Year 2017 and this deficit grows to 15 percent in FY2018. BLS is at a critical juncture particularly with respect to funding in the FY2018 and FY2019 appropriation cycles, yet does not have the resources or administration support to educate members of its Congressional Appropriations or Oversight Committees of the consequences of systematic underfunding. BLS has no congressional champions on either side of the aisle, and its support from the Joint Economic Committee has eroded. Compounding this problem is a lack of awareness among business leaders of this situation and the risks it poses for them. While many academic and business economists support appropriate funding for the BLS, few CEOs of large companies or trade associations advocate for the BLS. To remedy this situation, it will be necessary to establish the Friends of BLS as a vibrant community of advocacy for the BLS. This advocacy body is now led by Dr. Erica Groshen, the former Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The goal is to elevate the advocacy of the Friends of BLS to levels similar to what the U.S. Census Bureau receives for the 2020 Census and the American Community Survey.

COPAFS Strategies to Advance Excellence in Federal Statistics

COPAFS is leading and supporting important initiatives to ensure the federal government is able to continue producing the high quality and relevant statistical data that its membership depends on. These include:

- ✓ Advocate for federal agencies that sometimes can't advocate on their own behalf. For example, COPAFS is a co-chair of the Friends of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and the Friends of the National Center for Health Statistics.
- ✓ Work with stakeholder coalitions to support proper funding for the 2020 Census and the American Community Survey.
- ✓ Ensure members of Congress, COPAFS members, and other stakeholders are informed of critical issues facing agencies that produce federal statistics.
- ✓ Alert members and stakeholders of breaking issues that need immediate support and attention.
- ✓ Organize and support ongoing educational efforts for members of Congress and their staff on the value and importance of federal statistics both nationally and in their own states and districts.

- ✓ Create and join in powerful coalitions of organizations and businesses to advocate on behalf of federal agencies that produce statistics, building broad support across a wide spectrum of data users.
- ✓ Build partnerships with foundations that can help fund critical research in the statistical agencies and academia in order to ensure the on-going modernization of how statistical data are created and made available to the public and researchers and to fund educational efforts.
- ✓ Work closely with the Chief Statistician of the United States and the statistical agencies to help inform and promote modernization efforts underway and assist agencies in keeping abreast of new stakeholder data needs.

COPAFS accomplishes these efforts through a number of specific activities, including:

1. Speaking at widely attended events that promote the value and importance of federal statistics and alert stakeholders of pressing issues.
2. Hosting monthly stakeholder meetings with the Chief Statistician of the United States.
3. Issuing cosigned support letters, conducting education and training events, and visiting key Congressional and Administration offices.
4. Seeking foundation grants to develop informational materials to build trust and confidence in federal agencies; fund research projects to demonstrate the value of federal statistics and to explore innovative methods to provide more relevant and timely statistical data; and conduct workshops and conferences that bring together federal and non-federal experts to address important research and methodology topics. Currently COPAFS is exploring the feasibility of a large conference in 2019 focused on open data science and federal statistics.
5. Cosponsoring the Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology biannual research and policy conference, an important venue for federal and non-federal experts to share research papers and experiences.
6. Holding quarterly meetings and issuing timely information notices for members and stakeholders
6. Leveraging members to bring stakeholder insights into the next steps for implementing the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking report recommendations.
7. Developing a digital strategy to provide stakeholders real-time information on emerging issues, challenges, and opportunities for federal statistics.

Membership

COPAFS has a strong membership base of Associations that support, produce, and consume high quality federal statistics in a wide array of disciplines. As a result, COPAFS is well positioned to make significant contributions in support of our essential federal statistical programs at this critical point. COPAFS is also seeking to increase membership to expand its area of influence, and develop a broader base of users and supporters of federal statistical data.

Leadership

An active Board of Directors provides outstanding strategic support for COPAFS. The Board members have extensive experience in both using and supporting high quality federal statistics. In addition, John Thompson has recently joined COPAFS as the Executive Director. He brings a wealth of both public and private sector experience that will be an important asset in realizing the mission of COPAFS. He served for 27 years at the U. S. Census Bureau, where he held key executive positions, most recently as Director. He also served as the Associate Director responsible for all aspects of conducting for the 2000 Census. Mr. Thompson also served as Executive Vice President and then as the President and CEO at NORC at the University of Chicago, a highly respected and successful research organization. He has extensive experience with the Federal Statistical System, survey research methods, adapting new technology to improve survey operations, administrative and third party data, as well as an in-depth understanding of the needs of a broad base of stakeholders, privacy and confidentiality of personal information, congressional interests, and the federal budget process. COPAFS will draw on this expertise to successfully support federal statistics now and for the future on behalf of its members.

Members of the Council of Professional Associations on Federal Statistics

Member Associations

Agricultural & Applied Economics Association (AAEA)
American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR)
American Economic Association (AEA)
American Educational Research Association (AERA)
American Psychological Association (APA)
American Sociological Association (AMSOCA)
American Statistical Association (ASA)
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM)
Association for University Business & Economic Research (AUBER)
Association of Public Data Users (APDU)
International Association for Social Science Information Services & Technology (IASSIST)
National Association for Business Economics (NABE)
National Association of Forensic Economics (NAFE)
National Association for Public Health Statistics & Information Systems (NAPHSIS)
Population Association of America (PAA)
Rural Sociology Society (RSS)

Affiliate Organization Members

Abt SRBI
American Institutes for Research
Claritas
The Conference Board
Cornell Institute for Economic and Social Research (CISER)
Decision Demographics
Election Data Services, Inc.
Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc.
Georgetown University
ICF International
IMPAQ International
Institute for Social Research
Joint Program in Survey Methodology
Mathematica Policy Research
NORC at the University of Chicago
Nielsen Media
Population Reference Bureau
Princeton University Library
PSB
RTI International
Sage Publications, Inc.
Summit LLC
The Urban Institute
Westat, Inc.