

Meeting 14 Notes and Actions
November 19, 2021

Next Meeting: January 21, 2022 (9 AM - Noon (EDT))

Meeting Agenda

1. Meeting Introduction, Agenda Review, and Reminders – Emilda Rivers and Alyssa Holdren
2. Context and Year 2 Considerations from the Evidence Act (CIPSEA) – Shelly Wilkie Martinez
3. National Secure Data Service Attributes and Functions: Facilitated Discussion – Avi Alpert
4. Year 2 Roadmap – Avi Alpert
5. Next Steps and Action Items with Committee Discussion – Emilda Rivers

1. Meeting Introduction, Agenda Review, and Reminders – Emilda Rivers and Alyssa Holdren

Emilda Rivers, ACDEB Chair, began by providing an overview of the day’s agenda, presenting a high-level overview of the Year 2 plans, and giving a few reminders.

High-level overview of Year 2 plans

- **Reflection sessions.** Following the release of the Year 1 report, the Committee paused its subcommittee meetings and held a series of “reflection” sessions to take stock of what worked well, what didn’t, lessons learned, and suggestions for Year 2.
- **Role of the Chair.** Rivers stepped into the Chair position halfway through the Committee’s first year, so her main emphasis was on guiding processes already in motion to produce a Year 1 report. And she is very pleased to say that the Committee delivered a report with timely, actionable, and relevant recommendations that set the stage for Year 2. However, there is much work left to do without the luxury of time. So, the Committee will take a measured approach that establishes building blocks for the report throughout the year. The Chair will be coordinating this process, monitoring progress, and stepping in, as needed. ACDEB will deliver on the great promise of this Committee to shape the future of evidence building.
- **Year 2 roadmap.** The Chair, along with the support team, used the feedback from the reflection sessions to inform the Year 2 plan. Here are a few highlights of the roadmap:
 - **Subcommittees.** The Chair will use the input received from the Committee to define more clearly the guardrails for each of the focus area subcommittees and the Coordinating Committee. This will include providing additional guidance to the focus areas on how the ongoing efforts of each group build toward the Year 2 report, considering ways to plug in members’ expertise beyond their assigned subcommittees, and working with the Coordinating Committee to draft a simple charter outlining its roles and responsibilities.
 - From there, the Committee will relaunch the subcommittees, and these groups will map out more specific deliverables for Year 2. The goal of the first couple of meetings of each subcommittee will be to create focus area roadmaps and discuss specific items that should be connected across subcommittees and linked to the Evidence Act.

- **Public meetings.** After this meeting, the Committee will hold public meetings every other month—in January, March, May, July, and September—and then release the Year 2 report and close out its time together in October of next year.
- **January meeting.** Building on today’s conversation around required NSDS attributes and functions, at the January meeting, the Committee will investigate several possible models for meeting those requirements. The goal is, as a full Committee, to review the options, weigh the pros and cons of each against the required attributes and functions, identify sticking points, and, ultimately, reach agreement on the structure of the NSDS. This is a critical decision the Committee must make to move forward.
- **March, May, and July meetings.** The bulk of the work during the spring and summer will happen within the subcommittees. This includes gathering information, developing findings, weighing options, drafting recommendations, and presenting recommendations to the full Committee. These recommendations (and the related findings) will be presented on a rolling basis at the March, May, and July meetings. By the end of the July meeting, all recommendations will be presented to and discussed with the full Committee. To the fullest extent possible, the Committee will also have approved its Year 2 recommendations at that that point.
- **Year 2 report.** By the beginning of September, there will be a fully compiled, comprehensive, and consistent draft of the Year 2 report ready for review by the Committee. From there, the Committee, with support from the staff, will incorporate comments, address outstanding issues, and format the report for publication.
- On **October 14, 2022**, the Committee will deliver the Year 2 report to OMB.
- **Final meeting.** The Committee will hold a final meeting in October to wind down the Committee and give members an opportunity to share final thoughts.
- While the broad strokes and deliverables of this roadmap are driven by the charter, the Committee will continue to gather input and adjust its priorities, plans, and processes, as needed. This includes incorporating feedback from today’s meeting, future Committee meetings, and the subcommittees. In addition, in January, the Committee is expecting a response from the Office of Management and Budget on the Year 1 report. This response will frame the discussion with OMB that will take place throughout Year 2.

U.S. Chief Statistician

- The Office of Management and Budget recently closed a job announcement for the next Chief Statistician of the United States.
- During multiple meetings and in the Year 1 report, the Committee made references to the leadership role of the Chief Statistician for the federal evidence-building system. Under the requirements of the Evidence Act, the Chair of this Committee is the Chief Statistician. Beyond chairing the Committee, the Chief Statistician will be instrumental to leading and coordinating

an effective federal data ecosystem and to supporting government-wide data standards. The position of Chief Statistician has been vacant since early January 2020.

- The Year 1 report lays the groundwork for the Committee’s second year and provides a natural way to open communication between OMB and the Committee. With or without a new Chief Statistician, the relationship with OMB will be a conversation moving forward, with regular engagement and possible feedback loops. The Committee expects that OMB will provide a response to the Year 1 report in January, giving a big opportunity to get this conversation started.

Alyssa Holdren, ACDEB Designated Federal Officer (DFO), gave brief housekeeping/logistics remarks.

2. Context and Year 2 Considerations from the Evidence Act (CIPSEA) – Shelly Wilkie Martinez

Shelly Martinez, the OMB liaison to the Committee and subject matter expert on the Evidence Act, presented the National Secure Data Service (NSDS) attributes and functions from the Year 1 report and mapped them to concepts in the Evidence Act and other relevant statutes.

Outline

- As the Committee kicks off Year 2, one of the big tasks the Committee set out for itself in the Year 1 report is to “fully integrate and synthesize” its findings and recommendations. A goal of today’s meeting is to further define the requirements for a National Secure Data Service, which the Year 1 report describes as interdependent with a larger ecosystem and with Evidence Act implementation.
- The goal of the presentation is to facilitate the Committee’s synthesis by showing where Congress has already spoken to those attributes and functions, especially in Title III of the Evidence Act. The Chair has noted in the past that Congress addressed Evidence Commission recommendations to establish NSDS, in part, by granting some of those authorities and attributes already.
- Presentation will include: (1) NSDS functions and attributes from ACDEB Year 1 report, (2) NSDS building block from the Evidence Act, and (3) links between the Evidence Act and the Year 1 Report.

Year 1 Report Vision: Evidence Act and NSDS Links

- Committee vision statement from the Year 1 report has two parallel thrusts: (1) fully implementing the Evidence Act and (2) establishing an NSDS. So, this presentation highlights opportunities related to the Evidence Act, so that the NSDS conversation can be advanced in light of what is already addressed in the law.
- Title III of the Evidence Act was a reauthorization and significant expansion of the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA 2002)—so, the proper name for Title III is “CIPSEA 2018.” Using that language helps the Committee to think about how the original CIPSEA provisions and the new ones form a set; that is, a comprehensive national statistical and data confidentiality law.

- From these new provisions, you can see how the authorities and responsibilities assigned to CIPSEA actors (chiefly OMB and recognized statistical agencies and units), have a lot of alignment with the Committee’s discussions.
- So, the operative questions the presentation seeks to inform are: (1) Where are the attributes and authorities that the Evidence Commission recommended for an NSDS already in law? (2) How does that information shape the Committee’s work? (Martinez addressed the first question; the second one is for the Committee to answer.)
- As a practical matter, the overlap between these two questions strengthens OMB’s understanding of how the portion of an NSDS that handles requests for data, handles data themselves, and the decisions about access frameworks is related to the upcoming regulations. As a result, one question the Committee might consider is the relative priority it would like to give in Year 2 to advising OMB on the regulations and guidance, which is in the Evidence Act as a role for the Committee.

Vision for a National Secure Data Service: Attributes and Functions

Martinez presented a list of attributes and functions from the ACDEB Year 1 report in the following categories:

- **Structural requirement:** Legally recognized entity with hardware, software, and administrative infrastructure and capability
- **Required organization attributes:** Transparency and trust; accessibility; independence; legal responsibility to acquire, protect, and link data; scalable functionality; sustainability; oversight and accountability; intergovernmental support
- **Required functional capabilities:** Coordinating function (across governmental and non-governmental entities), communicating function (value and use of data), R&D function (data privacy, linkage technology), data concierge/librarian function

The Evidence Act (CIPSEA 2018): Building Blocks for the NSDS

Martinez provided a list of what is new in CIPSEA 2018. The CIPSEA provisions may look familiar from the Committee’s first meeting in October 2020 or from the crosswalk with the Commission recommendations that was provided to the Committee. Some of the existing 2002 authorities and responsibilities are relevant to this discussion, too.

- From the ACDEB Year 1 Report: “The Evidence Act granted new authorities and even greater protections to federal statistical agencies, giving them responsibilities that the Evidence Commission identified as ones for an NSDS. The Evidence Act creates a statistical agency presumption of access to federal government data, which statistical agencies are to protect by implementing a consistent, secure, and comprehensive approach set in regulation, and then make those data available through a standard application process and tiered access framework.”

- In addition (and for emphasis), a major enabler of those new authorities is the increased levels of autonomy and support provided for the statistical agencies to act as trusted intermediaries in the data sharing and access space.
- The Evidence Act requirements are designed to enhance the way the statistical agencies work as a system to facilitate evidence building, just as envisioned by the Commission, even prior to introducing an NSDS coordination function into the ecosystem. For example, the regulations for each section of CIPSEA 2018 are required to set forth a standard set of criteria or a standard framework under which these agencies will act.
- Given the goals of the presentation, Martinez is not emphasizing all actors in the evidence ecosystem in this presentation. That is not in any way to discount their importance. A very inadequate summary statement would be to say that many actors are clients of the statistical agencies and statistical system, and many others are contributors to that system, such as of administrative data.

Table: NSDS Attributes and Functions vs. CIPSEA 2018 Provisions and Other Relevant Statutes

Martinez presented a crosswalk between CIPSEA 2018 and the list of attributes and functions for an NSDS from the Year 1 report.

- The rows match the list the Year 1 report shown earlier in the presentation.
- The columns are specific provisions in CIPSEA 2018 plus a few closely related laws, such as the provision that gives OMB authority for setting information and statistical policy and oversight of statistical programs.
- Martinez indicated that she will make a couple of summary level observations, then take a moment to drill down on a few of these. Ultimately, there's too much in the table to discuss today, but the hope is that this crosswalk, along with some ongoing technical assistance, can help the Committee dig in during upcoming subcommittee meetings.
- Observations: (1) There are a lot of "Xs" on the table. Some of these represent close alignment between what the Year 1 report and the law say. Some are partial or perhaps unclear because the Committee will be doing more defining later in the meeting. (2) An "X" can mean that the CIPSEA definition is the same or close to what the Committee had in mind for the NSDS, and therefore the relevant authority is likely already in place. (3) Or the Committee can decide that the two are not quite the same and can dig into implications for the statistical agencies, NSDS, or both.
- Martinez clarified sometimes an authority or requirement can be conveyed in a single phrase or paragraph, so you would expect to see additional detail in a regulation or other places. So, for example, the Year 1 report might have said a lot more about an attribute than the law; a consideration could be level of consistency and using the additional detail within regulations or other places.

Example 1. Transparency and Trust / Independence

- Transparency and trust and Independence seemed important because they are fundamental attributes of being a statistical agency, just as the Committee sees them as fundamental to NSDS. So, high alignment seems desirable, and it seems important to know whether there are aspects the Committee considers important that are not attributes of a statistical agency.
- Prior to the Evidence Commission, OMB issued a policy called Fundamental Responsibilities of a Federal Statistical Agency or “Statistical Policy Directive #1.” The Commission said that that policy should be “codified” in law to “protect public trust” and to “further strengthen[s] statistical institutions by placing in law the expectations of independence outlined in OMB’s” policy. That recommendation became Section 3563, which verbatim lifted the four responsibilities from the policy into the law. The idea is that a statistical agency must have a degree of autonomy to perform timely, credible, objective, trustworthy, confidential work. Of course, the detail in the policy is still in effect while OMB works on a regulation to implement this section. One notable strengthening that the law provides is a new requirement that all other agencies (that would be parent agencies) must “enable, support, and facilitate” the statistical agencies in carrying out their work.
- In addition, there are a lot of transparency requirements on statistical agencies, pre-Evidence Act, and more post. In Section 3583, there is a requirement to have a transparent process for who applies for access to confidential data as well as a lot of details about those projects, such as review timeframes, appeals, and “any other information” that would ensure full transparency. This means that if the Committee believes there are certain elements of transparency important to the new Single Application Process, the Committee could provide that advice to OMB.
- Not able to fit on this slide are provisions for transparency around data collections, data acquisitions, and data dissemination. And, of course, as federal agencies generally, there are a lot of transparency requirements around budgets, etc.

Example 2. Intergovernmental Support

- By contrast to the first example, there are fewer “Xs” on the table. The one place that CIPSEA explicitly talks about state, local, and tribal governments is as clients of the Single Application Process (SAP). As the SAP is the “front door” to gaining approval for data access, this is very aligned with the Committee’s view that state and local evidence-building needs are relevant to NSDS. In fact, OMB has a requirement to consult with those stakeholders as it builds the SAP. Again, this is a natural place for the Committee to offer OMB advice.
- The Commission made more than one recommendation about federal and state interactions on data access. Those would be among the half of the recommendations that did not get included in the Evidence Act.

Example 3. Accessibility / Legal Responsibility to Acquire, Protect, and Link Data

- This example is about the fundamental functions of a statistical agency, which are to acquire, protect, and provide access to data, and increasingly that includes access to administrative and other non-statistical data and record linkage. These functions have been core to the Evidence Commission, Evidence Act, and Committee vision for evidence building.
- There were too many “Xs” to put all relevant provisions on the slide, so Martinez highlighted a few considerations that had not come up in the other examples. First, the Presumption of Accessibility (Section 3581) is an explicit new authority that allows statistical agencies timely access, upon request, to any federal data asset, unless there is a legal prohibition that leaves no room for discretion. OMB is to issue regulations implementing this provision. Presumably, if the NSDS is handling data, it would need this authority as well. If NSDS is coordinating across organizations, it would rely other statistical agencies to obtain access to data needed for evidence-building projects. This regulation is another opportunity for the Committee to advise OMB.
- Expanding Access to Data (Section 3582) is significant because it requires standard frameworks across all CIPSEA entities for data access and protection—these frameworks would also have to accommodate access to linked data. The typical way OMB describes these frameworks is one for tiered access, which in this case is supposed to align data sets by their level of sensitivity to a given access tier, and a framework for measuring and mitigating re-identification risk. Again, OMB is to regulate on this framework. The Committee’s work fits in here because the access tiers will need to be implemented using one or more of the methods that the Technical Infrastructure subcommittee has been discussing, such as synthetic data with validation, and the risk mitigation will use one or more methods such as differential privacy. This framework would apply to all CIPSEA actors, including NSDS. Again, this is a potential area for Committee input to the regulatory development.

Example 4. R&D Function

- There is nothing in CIPSEA, and nothing in the Evidence Act, that established this function. In fact, the Evidence Commission specifically recommended R&D—and facilitating adoption government wide—as a function of the NSDS because it is not any one entity’s responsibility in government today.
- Of the four functions the Committee has identified for the NSDS, this is the only one that is not addressed (in whole or in part) in the law.

Conclusion

- Linking the ACDEB Year 1 report to the Evidence Act and related statutes is one way to integrate and synthesize the Committee’s work in Year 2.
- There is lots of room to dive deeper and explore connections with the Evidence Act.

The Chair, Emilda Rivers, laid out possible next steps that build off what Martinez presented.

- The **full Committee** will continue to identify and assess connections between the Evidence Act and foundational areas from the Year 1 report (like the structure of the National Secure Data Service).
- The **focus areas** will explore links to specific recommendations and report findings to the full Committee. This exploration will be part of the planning process for Year 2 that each subcommittee will prioritize during its first couple of meetings.
- The **Coordinating Committee** will help identify connections that cut across focus areas and outline roles and responsibilities for each impacted group.
- More fully connecting the content of the Year 1 report to the Evidence Act and other relevant statutes will be a key part of integrating and synthesizing the Committee’s work from Year 1 and will inform its steps going forward.

Committee feedback/discussion

- **Question:** Where do federal agencies fit into this? Are there requirements for other federal agencies (beyond the statistical agencies) in terms of consistency and accuracy of data, etc.?
Answer: There are things that are not explicit in CIPSEA but in other statutes (e.g., Section 3504, Section 3506, and all agency statutes); the crosswalk presented is a work in progress, and there could be additional statutes and “Xs” added.
- **Question:** How do other items OMB has in place (e.g., work on the Standard Application Process (SAP), existing policies and standards) fit in here?
Answer: Update on the SAP will be covered with the full Committee soon—there is a lot of ongoing work. In addition, a lot of work is on developing recommendations that are not in the public domain. The Committee can proactively discuss items and then also comment on them once they are public.
Follow-up: What about work already under way on risk assessments?
Answer: The Committee can arrange to hear more information on the Data Protection Toolkit.
- **Comment:** Legislation is required to fund these things; legislation can also go beyond what is in previous laws.
Response: Yes, this presentation is helping the Committee see what is in existing law and what is not.
- **Comment:** Additional Evidence Commission recommendations (beyond those codified in the Evidence Act) could serve as a roadmap for the Committee in Year 2. The idea behind the Committee was to discuss the foundation for the NSDS, and the Committee should explore whether there are additional things to take from the Evidence Commission.
Response: There is a subcommittee recommendation in the Year 1 report to weigh in on Evidence Commission recommendations.

- **Comment:** OMB needs to clarify the purpose of the SAP. There's the application process, and then there's going through various hoops to get the Special Sworn Status needed to access data even if the project is approved. There are different agency requirements for this status, and there are overlapping/duplicative requirements. The Committee could think about standardizing the entire process for applying and disclosure (e.g., harmonizing trainings for handling Title 13, Title 26, and comingled data).

Response: The Evidence Act provision is to harmonize the application process—this is being developed now. All agencies will abide by identical sets of procedures, including incorporating reviews on data sensitivity levels under Section 3582, etc. First, researchers will need to apply, then statistical agencies will apply a common framework for sensitivity and tiers of access. Regulations must build out the framework for tiered access, and then everyone will use this framework. The Committee could advise on how to marry SAP with access provisions (e.g., how the Five Safes Framework fits in here); policies should fit together and address the whole lifecycle.

- **Question:** Can OMB share pre-decisional information with the Committee for review and comment?

Answer: OMB cannot share drafts with the full Committee, as they would be subject to the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act. In addition, even if OMB is asking specific members for comment, this would be subject to the Federal of Information Act. OMB is looking for ways to gather Committee input.

Follow-up: OMB is thinking about questions it can ask to solicit advice from the Committee (e.g., the Five Safes Framework) and can use targeted questions for feedback.

- **Comment:** Other relevant statutes to include here are FISMA and the Privacy Act. The Committee should acknowledge that standards and guidelines flow from there (for example, Privacy Act touches on transparency, trust, and data availability).

Response: There are lots of columns for other statutes that could be added, as well as the corresponding "Xs" that apply to statistical agencies and federal agencies more broadly. The Privacy Act lifts language from CIPSEA, and connections are required in the regulations.

Follow-up: Understanding the baseline requirements (e.g., with security) will be important. NSDS could be a FISMA agency, subject to existing guidelines. The Committee needs to establish the baseline requirements under existing frameworks. Likewise, with radical transparency, need to understand the baseline.

Response: This session presented the baseline for CIPSEA, and the Committee will need to understand the "universe" of baseline items. With FISMA, regulation for Section 3582 will be an input, as federal agencies fall under FISMA. There is a "layered" way of thinking about how these statutes intersect with the Committee's work.

- **Comment:** A lot of evidence is achievable but painful; the Committee should suggest what needs to be done differently.

Response: It is important for the Committee to recognize that the Evidence Act is not completely implemented. The NSDS is one part of the solution; OMB will also need to get the regulations right.

- **Comment:** This is not just about providing microdata in the clear—the Committee can explore other ways to present data for evidence building, including synthetic data. There are other ways than Special Sworn Status or enclaves for researchers to access what they need. The NSDS should provide a touchpoint for researchers to understand rules for accessing data.
- **Comment:** For states and federal agencies, there is a tension on consistency and protected data with their own sets of laws and policies. One approach might be to take tiered access frameworks and put in-demand datasets against these frameworks to see where there is a conflict in law or interpretation of the law. Issues could be resolved from the legal side or the technology side. A framework could have a couple dimensions with access, effecting legislative changes, etc. Does the Committee have license to address such changes?
- **Comment:** The Committee needs to flesh out a multi-tiered access system with direct access and alternatives to lengthy vetting process. Alternative access points could include secure multiparty computation and synthetic data with validation server. The Committee should provide information on how to use alternatives; specifically, the Legislation and Regulations subcommittee could make recommendations on harmonizing differences in processes/access requirements.

Follow-up: Legislation and Regulations subcommittee (under co-chairs Nicholas Hart and Christine Heflin) are looking at this. Forthcoming regulation on restricted access suggests that any data set could be in more than one tier of access, like raw data, other versions, applying different technologies—sensitivity of data set is not in a fixed state, and there are multiple dimensions.

The Chair concluded by noting that there is a lot of information to digest and encouraging members to look at resources that are available and start pulling together information that already exists. For example, there is a great amount of information in the Year 1 report itself. In addition, the support team will continue to build out the reference list and update the crosswalk Martinez presented.

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

3. NSDS Attributes and Functions: Facilitated Discussion – Avi Alpert

Avi Alpert, the Committee’s rapporteur, guided the Committee through a more in-depth requirements gathering discussion around a subset of required NSDS attributes and functions.

- The purpose of this session is to help flesh out what the Committee means by attributes and functions using content from the earlier session to inform thinking. The focus is on the “what” of these functions, not the “how.”
- The Committee will frame the discussion around user stories and requirements. User stories are descriptions of NSDS features from the perspectives of the features’ users. Requirements describe a service, function, or feature the NSDS needs to achieve its vision.

Topic 1. Intergovernmental Support

Question: What would beneficial features look like to a state, local, or tribal government user in support of intergovernmental coordination or partnership?

Committee feedback/discussions

- Many states do not want to hand their data off to the federal government. In addition, they do not want to wait months or years for answers—they want actual results from analysis, and they need to understand how to protect outputs (do not want to add noise to protect).
- It would be helpful for state and local governments to access data in a preliminary state—they need access to results (something in for something out). This is not about the value proposition; states need to understand output data privacy standards (rounding, formal privacy) and what that means for the “look” and interpretability of results.
- To address concern about states not wanting to share data, could use privacy-preserving technologies unless states completely trust the intermediary.
- The Committee should look at the success of the Coleridge Initiative’s Midwest Collaborative in terms of states sharing data. States are willing to share if it is consistent with their legal framework and mission, and states are willing to share in a secure environment. They are not fans of differential privacy techniques; tiered access that is valuable are comprehensive, summary tabulations and relies on the Five Safes Framework—safe setting, safe people. It is important to pay attention to drivers for states to understand timeliness and value proposition. On the Standard Application Process, Midwest Collaborative is working toward a common template and process and a common portal for sharing data.
- States/locals understand the value of data; however, they spend so much time prepping data for submission. There needs to be conversations about what states need; need to lower the administrative burdens to data providers to securely transmit and/or share data with NSDS; standards are key for submitting data; states also need data back for evidence building.
- How do we think about research in this context? The requirements for relatively straightforward descriptive statistics could be very different from a complex economic analysis; states/locals do not need the same things as academics; technology approaches could help meet needs; important to get better sense of use cases to move forward.
- Data format standards would be useful to both the states and the federal government; helps states use federal data and federal agencies use state data; employment data could be a good start.
- Need clear rules on what is allowable for states. There is heterogeneity in interpretation of what different state agencies can do. The Committee should recommend that, for particular use cases, here is where common standards and agreements could help break through (e.g., education and workforce use case, health statistics, unemployment issues).

- States are overburdened by federal requirements and restrictions. They need clear rules/standardization. There are both real and imagined restrictions on what can be done with data. The Committee should recommend how to help states share data within their agencies and with the federal government.
- There needs to be financial and training investments in human and infrastructure capacity within state and local governments to reinforce the standardization for data being reported; otherwise, standards cannot be met. Standards can go a long way toward consistency and accuracy, but the Committee needs to look at resource issues too. Different states/locals are at very different places as far as technology and resources.
- **Summary:** Need (1) standardization of rules, processes, and platforms; (2) two-way flow of data “up” to the federal government from states/locals and back “down”; (3) to provide aggregate data in safe ways; (4) to help states level playing field across the board with investment of resources
- **Next steps:** Support team will add report on transparency and reproducibility of standards to reference list. Other agencies may be doing things like this as well, and the Committee should include references to these projects. The Year 1 report included recommendations on standardization, and members should add their own efforts to the resource list.

Topic 2. R&D Function

Question: What are the requirements for a successful R&D function for the NSDS?

- Leonard Burman is working a lot with the Internal Revenue Service on developing more practical approaches for protecting privacy; however, research in those areas is very limited. For example, researchers can only apply and solve certain problems with tools like differential privacy. NSDS could support more practical models to protect privacy and handle threats and develop methods for employing things like secure multiparty computation and synthetic data with validation services. NSDS should harness private-sector resources. The National Science Foundation (NSF) is very supportive of this effort; however, there is more to be done than what NSF can do alone. NSDS needs to provide public-source information about how applying emerging technologies would be helpful to expand access to data sets.
- Main function of NSDS is to coordinate and connect users. NSDS is not a research enterprise; intention to focus on coordinating role (for example, coordinating existing efforts across NSF, DARPA, NIH, and other government agencies). The federal government is focused on this, but no one is coordinating across efforts. The basic science needs to be developed (e.g., needs development to protect input and output privacy, need to say for this class of users and this tier, here are the tool and pros and cons of each). NSDS will be a service, not just thinking about R&D; it’s more than that and includes enabling the production of statistics in other ways.
- Role of NSDS should be coordinating and facilitating R&D happening elsewhere and doing the R&D itself. If NSDS does not “do it,” who will?

- Crucial to have research happening as different people have different expertise, bias, experiences; need to evaluate scientific rigor of approaches; need an understanding of either/or of coordinating or carrying out R&D; need to consider other agencies' contributions. Other agencies are doing basic research to contribute to understanding in this space; why does it have to be one or the other (either coordinating or doing). NSDS should be sure to paint a clear picture of various points of view, even when there's a different perspective.
- The Committee does not need to make a choice—coordinating is primary and need to structure NSDS do this. NSDS also needs to be able to facilitate R&D (e.g., provide sandbox for exploring technologies, infrastructure and tools, and clearinghouse for research).
- Functions related to R&D include a sandbox, clearinghouse for ideas across government, and filling research gaps.

Topic 3. Coordinating Function

Question: What are the requirements for a successful coordinating function within the NSDS?

- One of the requirements for the coordinating function is about intersection of principles (e.g., the intersection of transparency and accessibility). A key success is bringing greater transparency to access; should envision that when users want to access data, they need an understanding of the steps to be undertaken. Part of accessibility is transparency to the process. Standardization may help with this transparency; also need to create accessibility to the public or users who are not as savvy and need to create an understanding of what is needed to be undertaken and how to do it. Finally, there should be metrics of timeliness of process (and other metrics). The spirit of the Evidence Act is to draw individuals closer to information—not just for experts. In summary, it is critical to make data accessible from technical and understandability standpoints.
- Need to make data easier to integrate and access. One of the charges of the Evaluation Officer at Commerce is to do that. NSDS should keep this conversation going. States are “laboratories” for this and can lead the charge for testing different approaches. There is lots of good information from states/locals that can inform how federal agencies work. This part of integration needs to keep going—there is an important role for communication and cross-pollination.
- There are lots of efforts ongoing in lots of places (e.g., Midwest Collaborative, Western Governors' Association). NSDS will be a central agency who is aware of these efforts and helps coordinate them. NSDS could be a clearinghouse for a variety of content.
- On the health front, coordination has gone well, and this is important aspect of NSDS; however, states must have a minimal set of capabilities in place, and they need minimal level of standards, resources, and training across jurisdictions before coordination can be successful. Even after many years of working with the states, the National Center for Health Statistics is still struggling with how to make this the case. This links back the need to build capacity at the state/local level.

- Where the federal government has forced standardization (e.g., MSIS, NDNH), comparable data exist. In other domains, there is a lot of work to be done.

Topic 4. Independence

Question: What does “independence” mean in the context of the NSDS, and what requirements might the NSDS need beyond those codified for statistical agencies in Section 3563 of the Evidence Act?

- Reminded of issue with Census and documenting undocumented persons; this seemed political, but it was also in laws. This could also be read as principles and practices for how the NSDS could operate within “normal” world, but the Committee needs to think about what happens in “abnormal” circumstances (like the Census example).
- There is an executive order on scientific integrity. Agencies are putting together policy, but it is tricky.
- The Committee has not discussed what remains closed and what gets shared. The federal government could have data collections that do not get shared with the public.
- The Committee needs to define “Independence” about what and from whom.
- This conversation is very important; trust regulation will provide a lot of information on this topic. Committee has heard from several members that this is a sticking point—this is central. The Committee needs to revisit this topic, so that others can chime in and think about what this means for the NSDS. Coming out of the reflection sessions, this is an area where the Committee really needs to be clear about its expectations.
- **Next steps:** Keep conversing in subcommittees and across larger group; this is a key question where the Committee needs consensus and clarification.

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

4. Year 2 Roadmap with Committee Discussion – Avi Alpert

Avi Alpert, the Committee’s rapporteur, provided an overview of the Year 2 roadmap, including the timeline, major deliverables, and decision-making process.

Committee feedback/discussions

- **Question:** What is the expected frequency of subcommittee and Coordinating Committee meetings?
Answer: Currently, these meetings have a biweekly cadence; Committee may want to meet more frequently or conduct more offline coordination to stay on track.
- **Question:** How do the case studies that were recommended in the Year 1 report fit into the flow? What about things like collecting data on cycle-time requests?
Answer: Case studies are part of the information-gathering process. When there are requests for information, support team can help facilitate sharing. [DFO explained possible flow of information gathering.]

Follow-up: It is important to look at case studies within and across subcommittees. In addition, feedback from OMB (in coordination with the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy) will feed into this discussion.

- **Comment:** On legislation and regulations, would like to create a matrix that shows levels of accessibility for a few of the more in-demand data sets (e.g., education, Census, etc.) and see where there are conflicts. This would require staff work and may even need to involve experts like lawyers.

Response: Chair is looking forward to this conversation—it fits in with what OMB is doing and if there are resources available. It is important to have this discussion about resources.

Follow-up: There is a cart/horse issue without the regulations on tiered access.

- **Question:** Is the role of the Coordinating Committee intended to be more about coordination and less about decision-making? Activities with this group were not always transparent in Year 1.

Answer: This group was always intended to have a coordinating role. Moving forward, will make sure that this is happening more explicitly.

Follow-up: It will be important to have a charter for the Coordinating Committee and to clarify ambiguity. Framework for the Coordinating Committee should be explicit.

- **Comment:** Subcommittees could finish their work before the end of Year 2. Of course, some issues may run up to the deadlines. The goal is not to prolong focus area work, and there needs to be enough time to work through interdependencies.

Response: In the coming weeks, the focus areas will chart out timelines and workloads. Some groups may wrap up their work earlier; other work may be backloaded.

- **Comment:** If there is time, the Committee should make recommendations on a few high-demand data sets—this would be productive.

Response: This should reopen the conversation on whether NSDS would “hold” data or demand ready access to APIs/streams of data that facilitate data sharing.

Follow-up: These are sticking points the Committee needs to settle. In addition, investigating a few data sets more closely will help identify gaps in what the Committee is proposing and how to overcome these obstacles in practical ways as far as access, linking, and analysis.

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

5. Next Steps and Action Items – Emilda Rivers

Emilda Rivers, ACDEB Chair, presented next steps and action items for the Committee, including the following:

- The Committee will use feedback from the reflection sessions and the meeting to firm up the Year 2 roadmap, including more clearly defining the roles and responsibilities for each of the subcommittees and the Coordinating Committee. From there, the Committee will relaunch the subcommittees, and these groups will map out more specific deliverables that drive toward the Year 2 report.
- **Reminder:** Email evidence@bea.gov with any additional comments or questions.
- **Preview next meeting:** On January 21, the Committee will reconvene to discuss models for the National Secure Data Service and next steps for Year 2.