

# Census Bureau Survey Sponsors Meeting

Director's remarks as prepared for delivery

February 13, 2023

- Good morning, everyone! It's great to see some familiar faces and even better to see faces I still need to meet!
- It was wonderful to chat with many of you at the meet and greet this morning. And I look forward to meeting more of you at the break.
- As soon as I knew about this event, I absolutely wanted to address you.
- You might ask why, but I think the reason is obvious....At least to me it is.
- Like everyone at the U.S. Census Bureau, I consider my role as director to be one of public service.
- We serve everyone, including you.
- And our relationship is rather special because you are the sponsors of surveys that we're honored and privileged to conduct on your behalf.
- We provide you with your data—the data you need to function as an agency to achieve your missions.
- The breadth and depth of data produced by the collective group here is quite impressive.
- Data from your surveys inform decisions about the landscape of American life—from economic well-being, to education, health, and housing, to our justice systems and labor force and much more.
- And let's not forget the Household Pulse Survey or HPS.
- It represents a testament as to how collaboration and partnership among us can be used to quickly develop a program...
- A program addressing the need for contemporaneous data on our nation during a time of crisis.
- Indeed, the HPS helped our nation understand how people's lives were impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In fact, I use this survey program to illustrate the value of timely data.
- Timeliness is an aspect of data quality that maybe we don't talk about enough.
- Even if the data quality falls below the gold-standard threshold of our flagship surveys, the contemporaneous availability of HPS data have proven highly valuable for getting a sense of how we're doing as a nation.
- Having said that, we are working to make our high-frequency surveys more sustainable, to improve their data quality, and to reduce participant burden.
- But there are some realities we collectively are facing.
- They should be of no surprise to you.
- The past 3 years have brought historic uncertainty...and historic change.
- Data users—including you, our sponsors—seek high-value, relevant, and timely information.
- But as you know, we're currently dealing with intensifying challenges to survey data collection.
- Response rates are declining; it's harder to secure the interviews we're getting; and so our per unit costs are naturally increasing.

- Yet, please understand that it's within our grasp to build a better, stronger federal statistical system.
- We need to think about data differently.
- We need to confirm or revise our data needs.
- And we need to do this in the full context of data quality.
- Yes, that includes considering classical measures of estimation bias and statistical variation.
- But it also includes dimensions like timeliness, relevance, and the principal uses of the data.
- By adding available funding to these attributes, we then can talk about the true value of the data.
- What's the value proposition?
- We've been asking that question at the Census Bureau through our transformation and modernization initiative.
- And I hope you've noticed—we're not doing it alone in isolation.
- Such efforts require a community-of-the-whole approach, both internally as a single enterprise... and externally through outreach and collaboration.
- You—as data sponsors—play a critical role in the development of innovations to benefit your specific surveys.
- In that spirit, consider a few innovations that we've initiated since our last prepandemic meeting:
  - There's a redesign of the New York City Housing and Vacancy Survey; it was deployed in 2021, and was fielded in-person safely and successfully during the pandemic.
  - Then there's the School Pulse Panel; it was developed quickly in 2021 to capture how schools were adapting to the pandemic.
  - I've already talked about the HPS. You provided critical substantive input to make the survey what it is today.
  - The American Housing Survey is making advances in measuring housing insecurity and sexual orientation and gender identity status.
  - An online self-response option for the Current Population Survey is being developed.
  - We're supporting Bureau of Justice Statistics in redesigning its National Crime Victimization Survey.
  - A new longitudinal cohort is under development for the National Survey of Children's Health.
  - Later this morning you'll hear about the EHealth Program that matches health records to American Community Survey data and our Community Resilience Estimates to gain insight into social determinants of health.
- More generally, today's presentations provide a view of our data collection landscape and the direction we are moving in our innovation journey.
- We're focusing on the tools, methods, and operational strategies that deliver efficiency, improve ways to monitor and assess data quality, and explore third-party data sources to improve survey data.
- Now...tomorrow's sessions will describe our transformation initiatives, which have gained significant momentum over the last several months.
- Ron Jarmin will provide opening remarks on transformation tomorrow morning.
- We're incredibly excited about the transformation initiative, which centers on a paradigm shift regarding how we envision data and its utility.
- Ron's a master at talking about that.
- But there's an overarching set of values and principles that I'd like to leave with you.
- They support and bolster our transformation.

- And I encourage you think about them as we go through our meetings today and tomorrow.
- The Census Bureau lives by our values of scientific integrity, objectivity, transparency, and independence.
- We also embrace the principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in their broadest and truest forms.
- Taken together, these values and principles provide very effective guidance for decision-making on things like the data we collect, who we collect it from, the methods we use, and on the utility of our statistical data products.
- Data quality, for instance, can take a different meaning if you think about cultural relevance of measures, or the timeliness of statistical data releases, the ability to access data, and at what levels of granularity...or the return on investment.
- The principle of inclusion motivates our community-of-the -whole approach, for instance.
- We can achieve higher levels of creativity and excellence by seeking and incorporating more diverse voices.
- And that includes yours.
- Now, as our sponsors, our values lead us to embrace mutual respect, a shared vision for your products, clear expectations, and, of course, accountability.
- We're eager to collaborate with you and look forward to overcoming all challenges that lie ahead.
- And we'll only be successful if we do this together.
- Thank you again for joining us, and we hope you find these meetings beneficial.