



CONSORTIUM of SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS



Social and Behavioral Science Research:

Essential to keeping America competitive, prosperous and safe



Ten Recommendations for the 45th President of the United States

December 2016

So many of the immediate challenges facing the next Presidential Administration will require solutions based on sound, reliable science. Federally-supported scientific research—including social and behavioral science research—provides an evidence base that the President and Executive Branch agencies can use to produce science-backed strategies for addressing issues of national importance, such as crime prevention, health care for the underserved, the safety of our troops, early childhood education, and improved efficiency of American businesses, to name a few.

To achieve results in these and other pressing areas, the Trump Administration, working with Congress, will need to put science to work for the nation. Social and behavioral science research is an integral component of the U.S. STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) research enterprise. Though often misunderstood and underappreciated, federally-supported social and behavioral science research makes meaningful contributions to nearly every aspect of American life.

CONSIDER THIS:

Where You Live Can Make You Healthier

Built environments can greatly influence health behaviors. Social science has taught us that the “walkability” of neighborhoods—how conducive an area is to pedestrian activity versus driving—can influence obesity rates, which in turn influences the incidence of type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and other health outcomes. Everything from the number and proximity of grocery stores to the availability of public bike share programs and parks to the prevalence of locations where people can gather and socialize affect behaviors, such as diet, activity, stress levels, and social dynamics.

The Technological Revolution Has Roots in Linguistics

Study of the systematic nature of language—a central question within linguistics—has made important contributions to the creation of computer languages. In fact, the IT industry is one of the principal employers of linguistically-trained professionals. Major leaps in emulating human mental capabilities in the fields of information technology and computer science, such as in machine translation and artificial intelligence, have

been possible thanks to basic linguistic research.

Anthropologists Slow the Spread of Ebola

Anthropologists working for the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response were the first to discover why Ebola was spreading so quickly during its initial outbreak in West Africa. As a cultural practice, communities in the affected areas delay burying their dead for days at a time, often bringing the bodies into their homes for mourning and funeral preparation. Working with a global network of anthropologists, the UN team delivered briefings and targeted reports, producing evidence that helped guide policy and shape interventions and strategy in combatting the epidemic.

Economics Research Can Improve Government Functions

Fundamental research in economics has improved government policies, including in the areas of trade liberalization, air-transport deregulation, monetary economics, welfare-to-work reform, and antitrust practices. Much of this fundamental research got its start with support from the federal government.

Political Science Research Supports Counter-Terrorism and Conflict Prevention

Political science plays a critical role in understanding causes of international conflict and informing the means to prevent it. Research in the discipline, including federally funded projects, has tracked the growth of violent extremist organizations and relationships among groups to understand patterns in how they evolve and operate. Other political science work has mined foreign language data across the globe to understand causes of international strife and inform decision making on conflict prevention.

Social Science Can Help You Save for Retirement

Research in psychology and economics has shown that individuals are not saving enough for retirement and that they are generally passive when it comes to their savings behavior. Research conducted with support from the federal government led to enactment of the *Pension Protection Act of 2006*, which encourages employers to adopt features such as automatic enrollment, employer contribution, contribution escalation, and qualified default investment alternative practices. As a result, an increasing number of U.S. families are now saving more for retirement.



The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) is pleased to provide the following recommendations for how the Trump Administration and the 115th Congress can work toward achieving meaningful policy changes using the insights derived from social and behavioral science research. Additional information can be found on the COSSA website at www.cossa.org and at www.whysocialscience.com.

I Reinforce America's Position as a Global Innovation Leader: *Invest in Scientific Research*

RECOMMENDATION 1 **Work with Congress to provide real growth in science and technology research funding, including for basic research across all STEM disciplines.**

Many of the innovations noted earlier, and countless others, would not have been possible without initial investment by the federal government. Federal science agencies like the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) have kept American innovation ahead of our global competitors, thanks to their decades-long, sustained support for **fundamental, basic research**. Unfortunately, being the innovation leader makes the U.S. a natural target. At a time when nations like China and South Korea are ramping up their investments in basic research, the U.S. research enterprise has stagnated. In some areas of science, our closest competitors are not only replicating our successes, they are surpassing us.ⁱ Many are approaching science as a necessity for their country's global competitiveness, while at home we are seeing the opposite trend—toward divestment in science.

As former House Speaker Newt Gingrich pointedly stated during a *Forum on Federal Investments in Science Research*ⁱⁱ in 2015, "Boosting research funding may be the most fiscally responsible step [the U.S. government] can take." Speaker Gingrich oversaw the doubling of the NIH budget in the 1990s and early 2000s, while at the same time balancing the federal budget for four straight years. He has since expressed regret that Congress did not also *triple* the NSF budget at the

same time. Speaker Gingrich's remarks remind us that it is possible to maintain support for basic research, and even make necessary new investments, while still being responsible stewards of the nation's finances. The key is to make such investments a national priority.

“Boosting research funding may be the most fiscally responsible step we can take.”

Speaker Newt Gingrich
July 2015

Government investment in basic research is just that—an investment. The economic, national security, and human health-related benefits of basic research tend not to be immediately realized because basic research is a long-term endeavor; it is impossible to predict where the path of scientific inquiry will lead us, other than forward. Unfortunately, the long-term nature of science too often makes research funding an easy target for cuts when budgets are tight and priority-setting is needed. But, like any investment, divesting in science today has significant impacts for the future timeline of discovery.

The reality of years of near-flat funding is bleak. NSF estimates that nearly \$4 billion worth of projects, more than half of the entire NSF annual budget, are deserving of funding but left on the cutting room floor each year. Simply

put, there are more exciting, potentially transformative research ideas than there is funding, leaving America's best and brightest with limited options and driving some to pursue their research endeavors abroad. Given that we have no way of knowing where or when the next scientific breakthrough will emerge, it is disheartening to see so many innovative ideas go unsupported.

Recognizing the centrality of scientific research to America's broader economic, social, and security interests, more than 500 organizations representing top U.S. industries (including Boeing, John Deere, Microsoft, National Association of Manufacturers, and Northrop Grumman), higher education, and scientific and engineering societies endorsed the statement, *Innovation: An American Imperative*ⁱⁱⁱ in 2015. The statement calls for at least **four percent annual growth for federal basic science research agencies, such as NSF and NIH**. The U.S. scientific enterprise requires stability, predictability, and sustainable funding growth, and federal policies that are patient and can tolerate a reasonable amount of risk in order to achieve the greatest payoff.

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

The National Science Foundation (NSF) funds basic scientific discovery, workforce training, and state-of-the-art facilities that keeps the U.S. ahead of its global competitors. It is the only U.S. federal agency tasked with **supporting scientific research across all fields of science**. By funding innovative, cutting-edge research across all areas, the U.S. is not betting on a single field of research to produce the next big innovation or life-

changing finding. Instead, we are making investments that allow researchers to simultaneously uncover breakthroughs on all possible fronts. The agency utilizes a “portfolio” approach with the projects it supports. This recognizes that not every project will—or is necessarily expected to—yield a positive result, but that taken together, a diverse portfolio of research can collectively advance science.

The nature of basic science is to explore fundamental questions that may not have an immediate application, but that contribute to the scaffolding of knowledge that builds and progresses over time.

NSF supports about a quarter of all federally-funded basic scientific research conducted at colleges and universities nationwide. **Notably, the agency serves as the largest single funder of basic social and behavioral science research.** Though the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate (SBE)—one of seven research directorates at NSF—represents less than 5% of the entire NSF research budget, it supports around two-thirds of total federal funding for academic *basic research* in the social and behavioral sciences (excluding psychology). Further, NSF’s Education and Human Resources Directorate (EHR) plays a critical role in fostering a well-prepared and diverse STEM workforce—across all STEM fields—and also supports research into education, learning, and teaching across the continuum of education.

Social science discoveries funded by NSF have helped to improve public health,

enhance the safety of troops in combat zones, understand how to prepare for and respond to natural and human-made disasters, reduce violence among our youth, improve the effectiveness of the criminal justice system, and generate billions of dollars for the U.S. Treasury with the creation of the telecommunications spectrum auctions. Further, every winner of the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences since 1998 has been an NSF grantee, with a total of 54 Economics Laureates having received NSF funding at some point in their careers.

To help the agency determine where precious resources should be spent, NSF relies on a world class merit review process, which involves an extensive network of scholars around the country. Experts from relevant fields volunteer their time to review proposals, which in turn helps the agency identify the most innovative and promising scientific ideas worthy of tax-payer support. **In short, NSF, through its merit review process, allows the demands of scientific discovery to dictate how best to spend basic research dollars, leaving politics and individual ideologies at the door.** This process has been emulated the world over.

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the world leader in basic biomedical, behavioral, social, and population science research, fostering discoveries that enhance the health and well-being of Americans. To be truly transformative, NIH will need to continue to embrace research from a wide range of scientific disciplines, including the social and behavioral sciences.

NIH supports basic and applied social and behavioral science research across its 27

institutes and centers (ICs) in recognition of the value these disciplines add to preventing and treating most diseases, disorders, and conditions. Social and behavioral science discoveries supported by NIH have significantly reduced tobacco use, reduced the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by demonstrating the impact of lifestyle changes on overall health, and slowed the HIV/AIDS epidemic by extending our knowledge about decision-making, drug use, and sexual behavior.

The NIH’s Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR), working in concert with the NIH ICs, is crucial in assisting NIH in delivering on the extraordinary scientific promise of improving the nation’s health through the support of research addressing complex and interacting factors. OBSSR’s trans-NIH mission allows it to guide the agency in coordinating the scientific community to develop the necessary research base to address the complex health challenges and persistent public health needs facing the country and the world. **Additional investment is needed to increase the knowledge base around topics such as the impacts of geography, environment, crime, and inequality on health.**

Social Science Research Informs Policy and Practice

NSF and NIH provide the lion’s share of federal support to social and behavioral science researchers. Less appreciated is the extent to which other federal departments and agencies support or otherwise utilize social science research. Operational or “mission” agencies, such as the Department of Agriculture or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, often use or support research in service of their agency’s mission. Federal investment in the social and behavioral sciences helps to ensure that

“Social and behavioral science” encompasses a collection of STEM disciplines engaged in the rigorous study of why and how humans behave as they do as individuals, groups and within institutions, organizations, and society. It often refers to the disciplines of and fields within anthropology, communication, demography, economics, geography, history, law, linguistics, political science, psychology, sociology, and statistics, as well as countless multidisciplinary subfields.



policy-making is based on evidence and that tax-payer dollars are wisely allocated. This science touches all sectors, from national defense to agriculture, health, education, and justice.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Numerous pressing criminal justice and law enforcement issues are at the fore of public consciousness today, including understanding the mental health needs of people who become involved in the justice system, the drivers of domestic radicalization, effective solutions to opioid addiction, and ways to improve police officer safety and community relations. By working with jurisdictions at all levels to compile data and support research, the Department of Justice (DOJ) provides key insights to help improve public safety by funding research through the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), and other DOJ agencies. Making the results of this research available to state and local officials and the public allows justice and law enforcement professionals to learn “what works,” adopt best practices, and improve public safety by leveraging the best research and data to protect the public, reduce recidivism, and support law enforcement and community relations. While objective research is needed now more than ever, federal funding in support of such research has been largely stagnant. **The Administration must prioritize federal data collection and research if we are to provide local, state, and federal officials with the information they need to inform how best to develop strategies to improve public safety in their communities.**

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES), housed within the U.S. Department of Education, provides the nation with critical statistics, research, and evaluation that improve education policy and practice. IES-supported research has led to the development of early interventions for improving child outcomes, generated and validated assessment measures for use with children, and led to the creation of the “What Works Clearinghouse” for education research, which catalogs

interventions that work and identifies those that don’t. It allows us to understand trends in student populations,

“In cyber security work, where the human is often the weakest link in the chain, it is especially crucial to understand the varying motivations and usage patterns that dictate how people interact with their machines, and the expertise in studying those issues in large part resides in the social, behavioral and economic sciences.”

Computing Research Association
April 2015^{iv}

as well as in schools and universities. Still, many research questions remain, such as how best to prepare teachers and how to understand the opportunities afforded by advances in technology in the classroom.

In addition, the Department of Education’s International and Foreign Language Education programs (known as Title VI and Fulbright) play an active role in keeping American students at the forefront of global education. These programs nurture cadres of college graduates with the cultural and language proficiencies needed to serve in government, including at the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and federal intelligence agencies. Sustained investment in international education and language programs helps to ensure America remains competitive within the global community.

AGENCY FOR HEALTHCARE RESEARCH AND QUALITY

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), housed within the

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), funds research on improving the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of America’s health care system. It is the only agency with the expertise and explicit mission to fund research on improving health care at the provider level (i.e. in hospitals, medical practices, nursing homes, and other medical facilities). AHRQ research provides evidence, data, and tools to tackle some of the health care system’s greatest challenges. For example, AHRQ-funded research has been instrumental in reducing hospital-acquired conditions by 17% in five years, translating to 87,000 lives and nearly \$20 billion in health care costs saved. AHRQ also supports science that improves care for people suffering from multiple chronic conditions—a group that accounts for two-thirds of U.S. health care spending—and helps doctors make better decisions and improve patients’ health by taking advantage of electronic health records and other IT advances. Without AHRQ, important research on topics like reducing waste and unnecessary costs, improving access to health care, and getting the best treatments into the hands of providers would fall through the cracks. **AHRQ provides evidence-based solutions to improve health care for all Americans, which will become even more necessary as the Administration works to enact sweeping changes to our health care system.**

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) **National Institute of Food and Agriculture** (NIFA) funds research, education, and extension programs to advance knowledge for agriculture, the environment, and human health and wellbeing. NIFA supports both competitive research grants and capacity-building grants to ensure that U.S. research institutions are equipped to conduct rigorous research that supports our agricultural sector. Social and behavioral science research supported by NIFA helps us protect and enhance our food supply through better understanding of human behavior and

economic incentives, improve quality of life and alleviate poverty in rural areas, find new ways to reduce childhood obesity and promote healthy behaviors, develop solutions to water shortages, and support and train the next generation of researchers in the agriculture and food sciences. Agricultural research—particularly through NIFA’s competitive research grants program, the Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)—has enjoyed bipartisan support in recent years. **The Trump Administration is well-positioned to build on this support, which in turn can generate solutions to pressing challenges related to the agriculture sector and our food system and enhance America’s security and competitiveness.**

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

The Department of Defense (DOD) funds basic research in the social and behavioral sciences to gain better understanding of regions of the world of strategic importance to the U.S. and the social, cultural, political, and behavioral forces present there. For example, DOD has funded projects that study how information is spread, how risk is perceived, how and why people move, and how organizations change; the effects of a lack of government and/or presence of corruption, understanding the economic drivers of human behavior, and discovering whether there is a causal relationship between environmental stress and stability; and theories and models to understand and define rising military power and to understand changing social structure. Research in these areas has obvious practical applications to national defense decision making.

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) monitor health, detect and investigate health problems, conduct research to enhance prevention, develop and advocate sound public health policies, promote healthy behaviors, implement disease prevention strategies, and maintain national health statistics. The CDC’s 25 offices, institutes, and

centers rely on insights from the social and behavioral sciences to understand the effects of behavioral, social, and cultural factors on public health and to rigorously evaluate public health interventions, policies, and programs.^v **Investment in the CDC’s social and behavioral science research helps it slow the spread of disease in the U.S. and around the world and helps Americans live safer, healthier lives.**



RECOMMENDATION 2

Work with Congress to cancel harmful sequestration cuts to nondefense discretionary spending.

COSSA joins with NDD United (www.nddunited.org), an alliance of 2,500 national, state, and local organizations working to protect investments in core government functions that benefit all Americans, in calling on the Trump Administration and 115th Congress to once and for all replace sequestration with a balanced approach to deficit reduction that takes into account the deep cuts nondefense discretionary programs have already sustained since 2010.

Discretionary programs, including nondefense discretionary (NDD) programs—ranging from education and job training, to housing and science, to natural resources and veterans services, to public health, safety and security—have been cut dramatically and disproportionately in recent years

(13.4% altogether since 2010, adjusting for inflation), the result of lawmakers’ attempts to reduce the deficit, even though experts across the political spectrum agree these programs are not a driving factor behind our nation’s mid- and long-term fiscal challenges. **If the President and Congress do not work together to stop sequestration, the resulting budget could:**

- De-fund preschool programs in 18 states, causing 60,000 children to lose access to preschool entirely;
- Shortchange Veterans’ Administration medical care by \$690 million, meaning 70,000 fewer veterans receiving medical care, fewer staff critical to improving quality of care, and delays in medical research;
- Eliminate the Community Oriented Policing Services or “COPS” hiring program, resulting in 1,300 fewer law enforcement positions safeguarding communities;
- Eliminate Positive Train Control (PTC) technology, which could have prevented tragic crashes in the Bronx and Philadelphia that caused a dozen deaths, hundreds of injuries, and millions of dollars in damage.

These examples do not even touch on the devastating impacts felt by the U.S. science and engineering enterprise, which is yet another victim of the draconian cuts initiated in 2010.

Both the *Budget Control Act of 2011* and the *Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013* established a **parity principle that treats defense and nondefense discretionary programs equally**. It is critical that this principle be maintained in any deal to replace sequestration, recognizing the equally important role of both defense and nondefense programs in protecting the safety and security of Americans. Cuts should not be taken to nondefense discretionary programs in order to boost funding for defense programs, and vice versa.

II

Use Social and Behavioral Science to Inform Policy Decisions at the Highest Levels

RECOMMENDATION 3

Immediately appoint a Presidential Science Advisor who understands the role of science—including social and behavioral science—in addressing our nation’s most pressing challenges.

Among the President-elect’s first tasks should be to set up his scientific infrastructure, including appointing a **Science Advisor** who can immediately get to work on identifying ways to bring science and technology to bear on our most pressing national challenges. The Science Advisor should be a respected national leader in the scientific community with an appreciation for federal investment in *basic research* and a keen understanding of the role of social and behavioral science in addressing complex, human-centered questions. She/he should have experience with U.S. science policy and federal departments and agencies that support scientific research, as well as the political acumen needed to productively engage with Congress in its oversight functions. To be most effective, the President’s Science Advisor must be included in all meetings with Cabinet officials and other Assistants to the President for which there may be a scientific relevance.

Once in office, the Science Advisor should be formally nominated as the **Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP)**. A single individual serving in both capacities (one requiring Senate confirmation, the other not) provides necessary continuity to ensure that the Administration’s science priorities are well-articulated and efficiently implemented.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Prioritize the appointment of other senior scientific staff and scientific advisory bodies.

To ensure there is no delay in implementing the President’s science priorities, it is important that President-elect Trump also appoint, with guidance from the Science Advisor, additional White House scientific staff as soon as possible, including an **Assistant Director for Federal Research and Development** and an **Assistant Director for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences**, both residing at OSTP. These positions have historically served an important function of maintaining productive working relationships with the non-government scientific community, ensuring that the Executive Office of the President has access to the most current science.

In addition, once in office the President should move expeditiously, yet thoughtfully to appointment members to the **President’s Council of Advisors for Science and Technology (PCAST)**. The membership of PCAST should represent the breadth of the science and technology enterprise, with balanced representation from the social and behavioral sciences.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Maintain the White House Social and Behavioral Sciences Team.

Not to be confused with the Assistant Director for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences whose responsibilities should include informing the Science Advisor and the President on topics to which social science can contribute and serving as a central point of contact within the Administration for the social and behavioral science research community, the White House Social and Behavioral Sciences Team (SBST) works specifically to improve federal government program and policy efficiency. Among its recent accomplishments include a number of rigorously tested trials that show promise for improving retirement security, college access and affordability, criminal justice reform, assisting job seekers, assisting families in obtaining health coverage and staying healthy, and improving overall government effectiveness and efficiency.

Under the leadership of President-elect Trump, the SBST can continue to identify areas for increased efficiency by bringing to bear the latest available social science findings.



RECOMMENDATION 6

Consider experts in the social and behavioral sciences for key cabinet, senior executive service, and other positions.

As the Administration takes shape over the next several months, we urge President-elect Trump to consider leaders who have expertise in social and behavioral science for appointment to senior Administration positions. Incoming department and agency heads must be respected experts in their respective fields and appreciate the contributions social and behavioral science research make to their respective agencies and missions.

Below are positions that would benefit from leadership with expertise in or who support the use of social science in meeting the challenges before the agency.

AGENCY	POSITION	PRESIDENTIALLY APPOINTED	SENATE CONFIRMED
Office of Science and Technology Policy (EOP)	Assistant to the President for Science and Technology (President's Science Advisor)	✓	
	Director, OSTP	✓	✓
	Assistant Director for Federal Research and Development		
	Assistant Director for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences		
National Science Foundation	Director (6 year term)	✓	✓
	National Science Board (6 year term)	✓	
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Director, National Institute of Food and Agriculture	✓	
	Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics	✓	✓
Department of Health and Human Services	Director, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality		
	Director, National Institutes of Health	✓	✓
Department of Education	Director, Institute of Education Sciences	✓	✓
Department of Homeland Security	Under Secretary for Science and Technology	✓	✓
Department of Justice	Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs	✓	✓
	Director, National Institute of Justice	✓	
Federal Statistical Agencies	Director, Census Bureau (5 year term)	✓	✓
	Commissioner, Bureau of Labor Statistics (4 year term)	✓	✓
	Director, Bureau of Economic Analysis		
	Director, Bureau of Transportation Statistics		
	Commissioner, National Center for Education Statistics	✓	
	Director, National Center for Health Statistics		
	Administrator, National Agricultural Statistics Service		
	Administrator, Economic Research Service		
	Director, Bureau of Justice Statistics	✓	



Safeguard the Federal Statistical & Data Enterprise as a Source of Evidence for Policymaking

A broad effort is currently underway involving the private and public sectors to promote “evidence-based policymaking,” the notion that government policies and programs should have a basis in rigorous scientific evidence. Indeed, in 2016, the Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking was launched as a result of a bipartisan, bicameral effort led by House Speaker Paul Ryan and Senator Patty Murray. The Commission is tasked with developing a strategy for ensuring that the best available data is accessible and used for policymaking. It is a broad charge that reflects the importance of the federal data enterprise and the need to support and enhance it at all costs.

Data produced by federal statistical agencies are used by the private and public sectors to inform decisions involving billions of dollars in investments annually, and by social and behavioral science researchers to help monitor the impact of policies and to develop new solutions to address pressing challenges and improve the lives of Americans. Federal statistical data are rigorously collected and analyzed, generalizable, comparable across time periods, and touch on nearly every aspect of life in America, including demographics, health, the economy, employment, transportation, agriculture, crime, education, energy, and science. Although many parts of the federal government collect data and produce statistical information, only 13 agencies^{vi} receive the designation of “principal statistical agency.” These are agencies whose primary mission is to produce official government statistics. The principal statistical agencies are bound by a myriad of laws and policy directives^{vii}, which ensure that official statistics are objective, accurate, timely, and publicly accessible and that responses to federal surveys are kept confidential.

Federal statistics provide decision makers on the federal, state, and local level with much-needed empirical evidence for making policy and evaluating the performance of government programs; they are used in the private sector to determine where and how to make strategic investments; and the availability of objective, public data helps level the playing field in the economy and keep markets stable.

RECOMMENDATION 7
Protect the integrity, stature and independence of the federal statistical system to ensure federal data remain objective and relevant.

One of the fundamental principles underlying a thriving market economy—and a strong democracy—

The Trump Administration can strengthen the federal statistical system by ensuring agencies have adequate resources, autonomy within their departments, and are appropriately free from external influence. For example:

BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION STATISTICS

The Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) produces official statistics on nearly every aspect of the U.S. transportation system, from commercial shipping to public transportation to traffic congestion and flight delays. BTS data help inform billions of dollars in public and private transportation decisions. Federal, state, and local governments use the data to ensure better use of taxpayer dollars and smarter, more efficient government. The private sector uses the data to inform where to place manufacturing plants or distribution centers and to improve operations. In recent years, the BTS has endured both a lack of resources and autonomy over its budget and information technology infrastructure. **Reestablishing the stature and autonomy of BTS would enhance its ability to produce crucial data on our transportation system and inform future infrastructure investments.**

BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) produces data on the labor market, working conditions, and pricing of goods and services, including the monthly employment rate. Despite its importance to the U.S. labor market and the broader economy, the Bureau experienced cuts to its budget and/or purchasing power every year between 2009 and 2015, leading it to cut back on programs and increasing the threat of higher operational risks. **Funding for BLS must be restored so it can produce accurate and timely labor market, workforce, and consumer price data.**

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the Department of Education collects, analyzes, and reports education data and statistics related to the conditions of U.S. schools. Policymakers at all levels rely on these data to inform innovations in postsecondary, early childhood, and K-12 education. The National Assessment of Education Progress, known as the “Nation’s Report Card,” is a product of NCES and is a critical resource for identifying long-term trends in state educational proficiency. In a time of global economic competition, surveys and assessments such as this are crucial tools for comparing and improving U.S. performance in reading, science, and math. **The Administration should elevate the head of the National Center for Education Statistics back to a Presidentially-appointed and Senate-confirmed position.**

is the availability of objective, public information. The U.S. statistical system serves this purpose by producing data that is credible, relevant, accurate, and timely on essentially every significant industry and sector in America. **This function simply could not be performed by the private sector.** If private firms were the only source for data that today is produced by federal agencies, businesses would have little incentive to make it readily accessible, leading to unequal access to markets. The lack of a single trusted source (i.e. the government) for important information about our economy could lead to competing estimates of the same information—so we would never know what the “true” GDP is, for example.

To ensure the objectivity and reliability of government data, the Trump Administration must prioritize protecting the stature and autonomy of U.S. statistical agencies. While generally housed within larger agencies and departments (such as the National Center for Health Statistics within the CDC), their long-standing role has been to serve as an independent, unbiased source for statistical information. A statistical agency’s independence is greatly aided when its leader is Presidentially appointed and Senate confirmed. Unfortunately, several top statistical agency positions have lost this privilege over the years, which has unintentionally challenged agencies’ ability to remain central to informing policymaking and to be insulated from the political influences of their host agency or department.

RECOMMENDATION 8
Support ongoing efforts to promote innovation in federal data collection and sharing, while ensuring privacy.

Tremendous innovations in data collection, dissemination, and preservation are occurring throughout the federal government. Agencies across the government are innovating by enhancing their use of administrative records, data linkages, and data sharing.



For example, NIH and NSF have both developed policies requiring grantees to include public data sharing and data management plans when submitting proposals for funding. In addition, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census Bureau, and Bureau of Economic Analysis have identified strategies for improving how they share business information, which will cut costs, while maintaining privacy. President-elect Trump must support these and other data-related activities aimed at streamlining data sharing and use them to inform sound public policy.

RECOMMENDATION 9
Make the necessary investments to keep the 2020 Census on schedule and under budget.

COSSA is a member of the Census Project (www.thecensusproject.org), a broad, nonpartisan coalition of stakeholders who rely on accurate, timely, and comprehensive Census Bureau data for decision-making and resource allocation across all sectors. A decennial Census is required by the U.S. Constitution. In addition to the role of the Census in apportionment and redistricting of Congressional districts, the data are also used to inform the distribution of over \$400 billion in federal aid to states and localities each year. Further, countless other stakeholders including businesses, local governments, emergency managers, and scientific researchers rely every day on Census data that is accurate and accessible. In short, Census Bureau data help to make government smarter and more efficient and helps to drive economic development and growth.

The 2020 Census is just three years away. After many years of research, testing, evaluation, and development, activities will culminate in the 2018 End-to-End Census Test—a “dress rehearsal,” if you will—which will integrate all systems and operations into a census-like environment. The success of the 2018 End-to-End Test is central to ensuring an accurate and cost-effective Decennial Census. At this critical juncture when testing moves to implementation, reliable funding is essential.

Technological advancements just since 2010 make the 2020 Census poised to be the most innovative yet. New counting methods—enabled by Internet response options, digital mapping and imagery to update address lists, and the use of administrative data—hold the potential to save about \$5 billion over the lifecycle of the 2020 Census. To do that, though, the Census Bureau will need to stay on schedule and finalize and test its new design, IT systems, and operations within the next year in advance of the End-to-End Census Test in 2018.

RECOMMENDATION 10
Fully fund the American Community Survey and maintain its status as a mandatory federal survey.

The American Community Survey (ACS) is the nation’s only source of comparable, consistent, timely, and high quality demographic and socio-economic data for all communities in the U.S. The ACS is a component of the Constitutionally-mandated Decennial Census, making it a “mandatory” national survey. The accuracy of the data collected by the ACS relies on this mandatory status. Approximately 295,000 households are chosen to complete the ACS each month; requiring households to respond ensures good geographic coverage of the country.

There are occasional efforts by lawmakers to make the ACS voluntary, citing complaints about respondent burden. However, doing so would significantly undermine the quality

of the data collected, challenge its representativeness, and inflate the cost of collecting the data. In 2003, Congress mandated that the Census Bureau conduct a test studying the effects of a voluntary annual survey. The test revealed that the Bureau likely would be unable to produce usable data for more than 40 percent of all U.S. counties, especially

less populous, rural areas of the country. Further, the annual cost of the survey would increase by \$90 to \$100 million (in 2003 dollars) due to a reduction of at least 20 percent in mail response rates (requiring additional surveys to be sent and more costly phone and in-person follow up). By maintaining a mandatory ACS and making the necessary

annual investments, the Census Bureau will be able to ensure a valid sample size, produce accurate, timely data, research new data collection methods, and streamline operations to reduce respondent burden, improve question wording, and control costs.

Social Science Can Help

The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) invites President-elect Trump and his Administration to call on experts across the social and behavioral sciences as they work to make policy that improves the lives of our citizens.



Endnotes

- ⁱ https://www.amacad.org/multimedia/pdfs/publications/researchpapersmonographs/AmericanAcad_RestoringtheFoundation_Brief.pdf
- ⁱⁱ <http://www.warren.senate.gov/?p=video&id=926>
- ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.amacad.org/content/innovationimperative>
- ^{iv} <http://democrats.science.house.gov/sites/democrats.science.house.gov/files/documents/CRA-Letter%20on%20COMPETES.pdf>
- ^v <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/su5502a6.htm>
- ^{vi} <https://fedstats.sites.usa.gov/agencies/>
- ^{vii} https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/inforeg_statpolicy

Science Policy Agenda for the First 100 Days

1

Work with Congress to **enact final FY 2017 Appropriations legislation** reflecting the bipartisan agreements that have been reached on funding for federal scientific research agencies.

2

Work with Congress to **eliminate the harmful spending caps and sequester** imposed by the *Budget Control Act of 2011*.

3

Craft an **FY 2018 Budget Request that is pro-science** and that includes globally competitive investments in basic research across all fields. This includes sustained investment in the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and other federal departments and agencies that support and/or utilize social science research to inform policy and improve lives.

4

Immediately appoint a **Science Advisor to the President** and nominate strong candidates to fill senior Executive Branch positions that have responsibility over research and development.



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COSSA is a nonprofit advocacy organization working to promote sustainable federal funding for and widespread use of social and behavioral science research and federal policies that positively impact the conduct of research. COSSA serves as a united voice for a broad, diverse network of organizations, institutions, communities, and stakeholders who care about a successful and vibrant social science research enterprise. The COSSA membership includes professional and disciplinary associations, scientific societies, research centers and institutes, and U.S. colleges and universities.