

# Challenges in Communicating to the Public About Administrative Data Use and Linking

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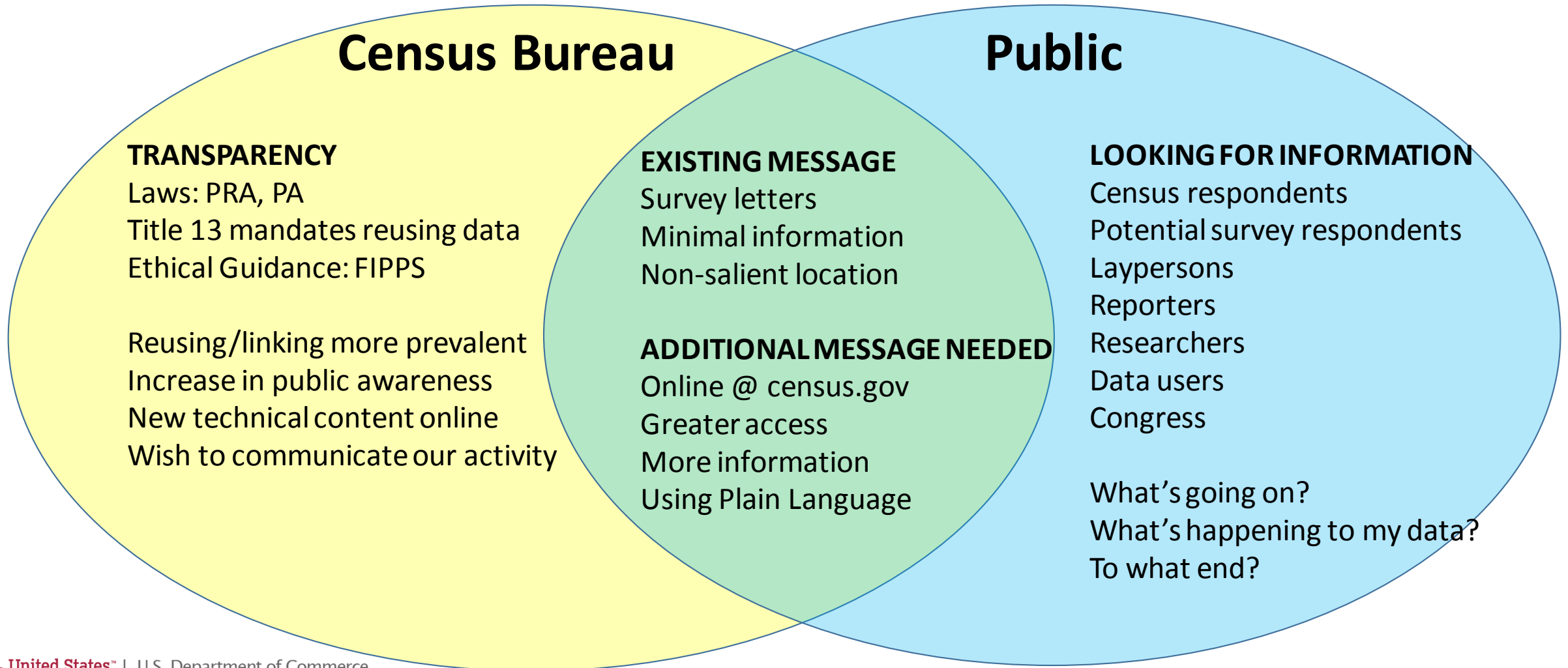
FedCASIC

April 12, 2017

# Presentation Overview

- Impetus
- Challenges
- Approach informed by past & present research
- Website analytics after going “live”
- Looking to the future

# Impetus



# Challenge #1: Turning Technical Jargon into Plain Language

**Wait...what's “Plain Language?”**

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## **Wait...what's “Plain Language?”**

A reader can understand it the first time they read it.

Written material is in Plain Language if a reader can:

- Find what they need
- Understand what they find
- Use what they find to meet their needs

# Challenge #1: Turning Technical Jargon into Plain Language (cont'd)

- Identifying technical jargon/concepts
  - *administrative data*
  - *administrative data use*
  - *linkage*
- Unpack those concepts using Plain Language and previous research
  - *combining data*
  - *with information from other government and commercial entities*
- Decide to educate reader on jargon to prepare them for additional website content?
  - *yes!*

# Intersection of Comprehension & Navigation

United States Census Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce | Blogs | Index A-Z | Glossary | FAQs

Search

Topics: Population, Economy  
Geography: Maps, Products  
Library: Infographics, Publications  
**Data: Tools, Developers**  
Surveys/Programs: Respond, Survey Data  
Newsroom: News, Blogs  
About Us: Our Research

Data Main | Data Tools & Apps | Developers | Mobile Apps  
Product Catalog | Related Sites | **Combining Data** | Software  
Training & Workshops | Visualizations

## Infographics

**Visualize Census Bureau Data**

Explore Census Bureau data in the Infographics and Visualizations gallery. These shareable graphics cover a variety of Census Bureau statistics and subject areas, from household and family dynamics, to migration and geographic mobility, to economic indicators.

How does manufacturing compare to other industries?  
Change in Median Household Income by County, 2014 to 2015  
LIBERTY USA  
America's Entrepreneurs  
Having a Boss vs. Working for Yourself

# Challenge #2: Illustrative Examples

- What benefits might the public see as a result of this activity?
- Existing examples are broad/vague (M-14-06 examples)
  - *expanding economic growth and education*
  - *fostering scientific discovery*
  - *provide the foundation for the research, evaluation, and analysis that help the Federal Government understand how public needs are changing, how well Federal policy and programs are addressing those needs, and where greater progress can be achieved*
  - *build evidence on which to evaluate the effectiveness of [agencies'] programs and policies.*



# Challenge #2: Illustrative Examples (cont'd)

- Forming successful, illustrative examples
  - Evoke broad interest
  - Specific/detailed as possible (Who? What? How? Why?)
  - Definitive
  - Have a “punchline” (graphic description of end result)
- Examples
  - (SIPP) *Data from this survey are used to understand and plan for the needs of government programs like Social Security...and to ensure more children are covered by health insurance.*
  - (Also from M-14-06) *Combining crime reports with information about local crime prevention and policing policies could shed light on program effectiveness.*

# Challenge #2: Illustrative Examples (cont'd)

- Examples used for website
  - *Social Security Administration data are combined with Census data to understand how many people will need Social Security benefits in the coming years and to plan for funding this important program.*
  - *Data from Medicare, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Census Bureau are combined to find out how many children need healthcare in the U.S. and how much funding will be needed as a result.*

# About the Bureau

- Who We Are
- What We Do**
  - Redistricting Data
  - Combining Data
- Business Opportunities
- Census Careers
- Advisors, Centers and Research Programs
- Congressional & Intergovernmental Affairs
- History
- Our Research
- Our Surveys & Programs
- Plans & Budget
- Policies and Notices
- Regional Offices
- National Processing Center (NPC)
- Contact Us

## Combining Data – A General Overview



### The Census Bureau uses data from a variety of sources.

The Census Bureau collects data about the economy and the people living in the United States from many different sources. Some data are collected from respondents directly (including businesses), through the censuses and surveys we conduct. We also collect additional data from other sources. Primary sources for additional data are federal, state, and local governments, as well as some commercial entities. These types of data are generally called "administrative data."

### This additional information is called "administrative data."

This information is called "administrative data" because data collected and maintained by agencies are used to administer (or run) programs and provide services to the public.

### The Census Bureau combines administrative data with survey and census data.

The Census Bureau is required by law to obtain and reuse data that already exists at other agencies. These data are reused to cut the cost of data collection and research, and also to reduce the burden on people who respond to our census and survey questions. By reusing data that already exists elsewhere, and linking it to census and survey data, the Census Bureau is able to conduct research that allows us to see the larger picture about the people and economy of the United States. By combining these data together, researchers can answer questions we couldn't answer before. This type of research allows the Census Bureau to help other government agencies better understand how their programs are working, and where they could be improved.

For example, Social Security Administration data are combined with Census data to understand how many people will need Social Security benefits in the coming years and to plan for funding this important program. In addition, data from Medicare, the Internal Revenue Service, and the Census Bureau are combined to find out how many children need healthcare in the U.S. and how much funding will be needed as a result.

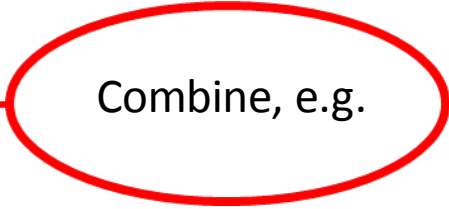
### All of the data collected by the Census Bureau is confidential.

All of the information we collect through censuses and surveys, as well as the administrative data we obtain, is confidential and protected by federal law. Data are only linked to answer questions that are part of a research projects that are approved by the Census Bureau and support our mission.

Research results that are published do not identify any individuals. Rather, summarized data is released that represent groups of people—generally in tables of numbers. Before releasing any statistics to the public, the Census Bureau reviews them to make sure



- ### Related Information
- [Data Protection and Privacy](#)
  - [Data Linkage Infrastructure](#)
  - [Administrative Data Research](#)



# 1<sup>st</sup> Message (prepare/teach)

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## 2<sup>nd</sup> Message (prepare/teach)

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This information is called “administrative data” because data collected and maintained by agencies are used to administer (or run) programs and provide services to the public.

# 3<sup>rd</sup> Message (combining data, examples)

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# Website analytics after going “live”

- Visitors Jan-March 2017 (8,150 total; 7,827 unique)
- Visitor locations (most from USA, outside of Census Bureau)
- Mouse clicks (40% arrive  $\leq 3$ )
- Are they reading? (35% looking  $\geq 1$  minute)
- Where are they coming from? (12% arrive from “Data;” 4% outside census.gov)
- Where are they going? (13% exited census.gov; 8.5% dug deeper)
- Organic search terms – none yet



# Future

- Continue monitoring website analytics
  - Navigation patterns
  - Monitor organic search terms & bumps in visit numbers
- Meet with privacy advocates
  - Fresh eyes, focused perspective, welcomed feedback
- Collaborate with other Federal Statistical Agencies
  - Evidence-based policy making efforts may necessitate a more coordinated admin data use/linkage message across agencies
- Keep abreast of level of sophistication/knowledge of the public in this area and adjust content accordingly

# Contacts

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*Administrative Records Coordination Branch*

[Ramon.Taylor@census.gov](mailto:Ramon.Taylor@census.gov), 301-763-6276

*Paperwork Reduction Act Branch*

<https://www.census.gov/about/what/admin-data.html>