Modernization and Reengineering the Census of Governments

Presented to the Association of Government Accountants

Professional Development Conference

July 13, 2010

Disclaimer: This report is released to inform interested parties of research and to encourage discussion of work in progress. The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.
Introduction to Governments Division

• Main Purposes of Governments Division Programs
  – Provide economic statistics about governments
  – Are the public counterpart to business, industry, and services economic data
  – Follow the activity of governments over time

• Response is Voluntary

• Virtually no Confidentiality Restrictions
Base Programs

• Oldest programs in Governments Division, often called the “base programs”
  – Census of Governments
  – Annual and Quarterly Surveys

• Census of Governments and related programs
  – Organizational Data – number of governments & characters
  – Employment Data – number of employees & payroll
  – Finance Data – revenues, expenditures, debt, & assets
## Base Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Survey/Program</th>
<th>Data Available For:</th>
<th>Data Items Included</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every 5 Years</td>
<td>Census of Governments</td>
<td>US</td>
<td>State*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Annual Survey of Public Employment and Payroll</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual Survey of State and Local Government Finances</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual Survey of State Government Finances</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consolidated Federal Funds Report</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Federal Aid to States Report</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public Elementary-Secondary Education Finance Survey</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State and Local Government Public-Employee Retirement System Survey</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td>State Government Tax Collections Survey</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quarterly Public-Employee Retirement Systems Survey</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quarterly Tax Survey</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Census of Governments:

- Identifies the scope and nature of the nation’s state and local government sector
- Provides authoritative benchmark figures of public finance and public employment
- Classifies local government organizations, powers, and activities
- Measures federal, state, and local fiscal relationships
- Supplies a unique profile of the public sector
- Primary inputs into Gross Domestic Product and Flow of Funds
Reimbursable Programs

- Because of Governments Division expertise in the public sector, we conduct surveys on behalf of other agencies
- Historically the surveys compliment the work of the base programs
- Cover such topics as:
  - Education
  - Criminal Justice
  - Federal funding
### Reimbursable Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Survey/Program</th>
<th>Data Available For: US</th>
<th>Data Items Included</th>
<th>Sponsoring Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biennial</td>
<td>Academic Libraries Survey</td>
<td>X X</td>
<td>Expenditures, staffing, circulation, etc.</td>
<td>NCES - (Dept of Education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biennial</td>
<td>Juvenile Residential Facility Census</td>
<td>X X</td>
<td>Facility characteristics</td>
<td>OJJDP - (DOJ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Annual Survey of Jails</td>
<td>X X X X</td>
<td>Jails and inmates</td>
<td>BJS - (DOJ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criminal Justice Expenditure and Employment Survey</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Finance and employment</td>
<td>BJS - (DOJ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Medical Expenditure Panel Survey Health Insurance Cost Study</td>
<td>X X X X</td>
<td>Health plans, premiums, benefits, and enrollment</td>
<td>AHRQ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>National Public Education Financial Survey</td>
<td>X X X X</td>
<td>Revenue, expenditures</td>
<td>NCES - (Dept of Education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>Non-fiscal surveys of the Common Core of Data</td>
<td>X X</td>
<td>Directory, membership, teachers, staff, dropouts, graduates</td>
<td>NCES - (Dept of Education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>State Library Agencies Survey</td>
<td>X X</td>
<td>Expenditures, staffing, governance, etc.</td>
<td>Institute of Museum and Library Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td>Federal Assistance Award Data System</td>
<td>X X X X</td>
<td>Federal expenditures or obligations.</td>
<td>OMB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Modernization and Reengineering
State and Local Government Statistics at a Crossroads

- 2007 report issued by the Committee on National Statistics (CNStat)
- Suggested 21 recommendations for improving existing programs
- Working toward addressing the majority of recommendations by the 2012 Census of Governments
Modernization and Reengineering

Census of Governments Modernization & Reengineering

In response to the 2007 Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) report (State and Local Government Statistics at a Crossroads), we have begun a major program reengineering effort with the goal of implementing the majority of changes by the 2012 Census of Governments. This program reengineering addresses all facets of the Census of Governments from content, to business analysis, to infrastructure, to dissemination and outreach. In recognition of the need to preserve the integrity of the historical data with the need for more relevant data, we have implemented a strategy to re-engineer our collections and processes while strengthening our relationships with our data users.

Data User Exchanges

In order to ensure the relevance and usability of our programs, the Governments Division has implemented a series of data user exchanges. These exchanges will begin with a series of five small workshops in the fall and winter and will culminate with a large data user workshop planned for the spring of 2010. These exchanges will explore the varying needs of the data user community as we address potential changes to the content of the Census of Governments, and its related annual & quarterly programs.

Please select the workshop you will be attending:

Select a Data User Exchange

Research Program

Our research program addresses the research that is needed to improve the quality, timeliness, and relevance of the statistics on state and local governments. It chronicles known current and future research projects for the Census of Governments and related surveys as well as the known research needs of our sponsors. The program also establishes a research report series and addresses issues of developing mathematical statisticians and analysts.

Process Modernization & Reengineering

Working in consultation with the MITRE Corporation, we completed an evaluation of our survey business process, corresponding infrastructure, and technology used to operate the Census of Governments.

Comments or Suggestions?
Please contact us by email.

This symbol indicates a link to a non-government web site. Our linking to these sites does not constitute an endorsement of any products, services or the information found on them. Once you link to another site you are subject to the policies of the new site.
Process Modernization and Reengineering

- Addresses all facets of the Census of Governments from content, to business analysis, to information technology infrastructure, to dissemination and outreach.

- Effort for the full system integration of the business processes and information technology to address program inefficiencies.
Research Program

- Research projects (sample design, dashboards, “design-based” estimation, small area estimation, nonresponse bias studies)

- Governments Division Report Series
  - Available at: http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/govern.html

- Training and development of staff through conference attendance, seminars, courses
Data User Workshops

• 6 Data User Workshops
  – 5 small exchanges in the fall and winter
  – 1 data user conference March, 2010

• Workshops explored the varying needs for data on government statistics, specifically:
  – research questions and data needs and uses;
  – identified government statistics data that are most useful;
  – identified additional data needs;
  – identified potential data quality issues; and
  – assisted in prioritizing future data needs.
Summary of CNSTAT Recommendations
CNStat Report Themes

- Data Quality, Relevance, and Utility
- Dissemination
- Timeliness
CNStat Theme: Data Quality, Relevance, and Utility

• Recommendations in Chapter 3: Get feedback from users

• Progress Update:
  – Increasing participation in user meetings
  – Series of focus groups with variety of data users in both the Federal statistical community and the private research community
  – Presentation to the Census Bureau’s Professional Advisory Committee, April 22
CNStat Theme: 
Data Quality, Relevance, and Utility

• Recommendations in Chapter 4: Conduct research on existing methods to identify efficiencies and improvements

• Progress Update:
  – Re-organized the division to develop an area devoted to research and methodology
  – Redesigning all aspects of the Quarterly Tax survey
  – Local Finance Central Collection Evaluation
  – Expanded the Annual Survey of Public-Employee Retirement Systems to collect additional information on OPEBs and additional asset holdings
CNStat Theme: Dissemination

• Recommendations in Chapter 5: Facilitate wider dissemination of products by issuing press releases; add value to existing data by providing simple derived measures; provide users with tools and documentation

• Progress Update:
  – Regular press releases began in October 2008 with the release of 2007 Census of Employment data
  – Introduction of quarterly surveys to “Tip Sheets” and planning on developing quarterly press releases
  – Introduced new analytical material to accompany releases
  – Availability through Build-A-Table and website redesign
Build-A-Table

Select category

Select variables

Retrieve data
Summary Briefs

**State Government Tax Collections in 2009**

In 2009, total state tax collections were $715.2 billion, a decline of 5.4 percent from 2008. Corporation net income tax decreased 20.7 percent, to $40.3 billion in fiscal year 2009. Sales tax collections increased 3.0 percent, to $245.0 billion, with 1.1 percent of the gain in sales tax revenue due to a 1.0 percent increase in sales tax revenue.

**Quarterly Summary of the Finances of Selected State and Local Government Employee Retirement Systems**

- **Corporate Stocks**
  - Corporations made up just over one sixth of the cash and securities holdings of major public employee retirement systems.
- **International Securities**
  - International securities soared past the same quarter one year ago, escalating 44.0 percent from $926.6 billion in the fourth quarter of 2009 to $1,421.3 billion in the fourth quarter of 2010 and up 15.3 percent from $363.3 billion last quarter (Q3 2009). International securities made up 17.2 percent of the total cash and securities holdings for the fourth quarter of 2010.
- **Federal Government Securities**
  - Federal government securities, unlike the aforementioned investment categories, continued to be lower than the same quarter one year ago. They fell 5.6 percent from $153.5 billion in the fourth quarter of 2009 to $148.7 billion in the fourth quarter of 2010.

**Total Tax Collections by Category**

- **Corporation Net Income Tax**
- **Individual Income Tax**
- **Sales and Gross Receipts**

**Total Holdings and Investments: 2006:1 to 2009:4**

- **Billions of dollars**

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*Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009 State Government Tax Collections.*

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*The data and technical documentation for this release can be found at [http://www.census.gov/govs/retirement/].*
CNStat Theme: Dissemination

• Recommendations in Chapter 6: Stay engaged with the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB); obtain status as member of the Governmental Accounting Standards Advisory Council (GASAC)

• Response:
  – GASAC membership obtained
  – Attune to changes in state and local government accounting practices and guidelines
CNStat Theme: Timeliness

- Recommendation 5-1: Research the benefits/ costs of adopting earlier release procedures, i.e., releasing preliminary estimates or releasing estimates as they are compiled.
- Ability to do this is dependent on GOVS reengineering its existing processing systems.
- Progress Update:
  - Successful in moving up the release of several products.
  - Some constraints due to data processing; are reviewing existing processes and methods to determine where efficiencies can be made.
Next Steps on Modernization and Re-engineering

- Continued involvement with the user and supplier communities
  - Identify areas of primary interest
  - Identify ways to obtain data more easily
- Implementation of Quality Improvement Program – “QUIP Trips”
  - Coverage
  - Record keeping practices of state and local governments
Next Steps on Modernization and Re-engineering

- Content review and determination for the 2012 Census of Governments
  - Extensive detail from Census of Governments
  - Changes to detail in annual survey years
- Redefinition and revitalized product line
  - Changes in dissemination methods and tools
  - Increased descriptive analysis
  - User guides
- Modernized and then Reengineered Systems
Questions?

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For updated information on our efforts, please visit:
http://harvester.census.gov/duw/