

Big Data Working Group

Membership:

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Jack Dangermond

Peter Glynn

Willie Jasso

Roberto Rigobon

Ken Simonson, Chair

Objectives:

- Provide guidance and feedback to Census on using nontraditional data to improve coverage, timeliness and accuracy and reduce cost and respondent burden for Census operations and output.
- Assist Census in creating a government-wide resource for use of nontraditional data.

Topics of phone meetings with Census on 7/9/15, 9/2/15:

- Census is setting up the Center for Statistical Modernization and Data Innovation and seeking a distinguished academic as the inaugural director. The WG expects to be closely involved with the Center as it takes shape.
- Census is examining a limited set of MasterCard Spending Pulse retail purchase data and will report to the WG on the feasibility of using it to provide greater detail (by location, product, vendor) and timeliness than Census' retail sales reports.
- Census has analyzed a retail scanning data set from NPD Group and will provide the WG a version of its report once proprietary information is redacted. Initial indications are that the data are not well matched to Census classifications by geography or product type.

Topics, cont.

- Census is participating in a bimonthly workshop series at MIT examining a variety of Big Data subjects and will issue reports on each session. WG members recommended including experts from Harvard.
- Census is in contact with staff of the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Federal Highway Administration and Federal Reserve Board regarding various data sources and initiatives. WG expects to be kept informed about productive leads from these discussions.
- Former Census Director Robert Groves is chairing a National Academy of Sciences panel that includes WG member Roberto Rigobon. It will consider a paradigm shift for Federal data collection. This fits in with what Census is attempting.
- The WG expects to meet regularly with Census (by phone).