

Census Bureau Data Stewardship Program

DS002 - Policy on Title 13 Benefit Statements

PURPOSE

This policy defines the criteria projects must meet to demonstrate they deliver a benefit to the Census Bureau's programs and activities. This policy requires written benefit statements to document how projects involving access to confidential data are expected to benefit the Census Bureau.

By ensuring that Title 13 benefit criteria are appropriately identified and documented, written benefit statements will provide a level of consistency and transparency to the projects conducted at the Census Bureau under Title 13, including those projects requiring access by Special Sworn Status (SSS) individuals to confidential Census Bureau data.

This policy also ensures that projects utilizing Federal Tax Information (FTI) benefit the Census Bureau in a way that satisfies both our Title 13 U.S.C. requirements, and the Internal Revenue Service requirements as outlined in the "Agreement for the Review and Approval of U.S. Census Bureau Projects that use Federal Tax Information." (The "Criteria Agreement")

BACKGROUND

The Census Bureau has a broad mission to serve as the leading source of quality data about the nation's people and economy. This mission encompasses many programs and activities, from the censuses of the population and housing, economy, and governments, to household and establishment surveys, and to other estimates and measurements of our nation's population and economy, including data analyses and program evaluations.

In achieving its mission, the Census Bureau places a premium on the appropriate use and protection of data collected or acquired in accordance with its legal authority under Title 13, United States Code. The Census Bureau may only use the information furnished under Title 13 for statistical purposes, which excludes any uses that affect the rights, benefits, or privileges of individuals or businesses. The Census Bureau cannot disclose or publish information from which an individual or establishment could be identified and it cannot permit anyone other than employees and sworn persons to access confidential information.

Title 13 Section 23(c) allows the Census Bureau to use temporary staff to assist in the work authorized under the law as long as those persons are sworn to use the data only for statistical purposes and to protect the confidentiality of the data they work with (SSS individuals).

The Census Bureau has historically used our authority to grant SSS to researchers from other federal agencies, and the academic and private sectors when their own research goals align with the Census Bureau's mission, and when their work has the potential to benefit the Census Bureau's programs. Their expertise and vision allows the Census Bureau to improve our methods and to use our data in new and innovative ways that maximize our value to the American public.

The specific requirements for granting SSS are outlined in [DS006 – Controlling Non-Employee Access to Title 13 Data](#). However, in making the determination on whether to confer SSS on these researchers, the Census Bureau must determine whether their work requires access to confidential data collected under Title 13, is consistent with the Census Bureau's mission, and will assist us with our work as authorized under Title 13.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all projects that use confidential data collected under Title 13 U.S.C. and/or Title 26 U.S.C.

POLICY

All projects that require access to confidential data must identify and document how that project will benefit the Census Bureau's programs and activities, according to the following criteria. To ensure the Census Bureau receives the anticipated benefits from such projects, all projects must provide technical memoranda, results, or findings that demonstrate the actual benefits of the project. Projects hosted in the Federal Statistical Research Data Centers fulfill this requirement through annual reports, and by producing a Post-Project Certification that documents how the benefits were fulfilled.

In addition, projects that use FTI protected under Title 26 must demonstrate that the benefit is the *predominant* purpose for conducting the project. The list of *predominant benefits*, are outlined below and documented in the Criteria Agreement between the Census Bureau and IRS.

Benefit Criteria Requirements for Projects

Note: Only Criteria 5-13 provide sufficient benefit to justify the use of Federal Tax Information in a project.

Criterion 1: The project benefits the Census Bureau by evaluating concepts and practices underlying Census Bureau data collection and acquisition, processing, estimation and measurement, and dissemination practices, including consideration of continued relevance and appropriateness of Census Bureau procedures to changing economic and social circumstances.

Explanation: This criterion includes projects such as those that are designed to:

- Evaluate whether the current data contain the information required to reflect changing social and economic circumstances and whether alternative sources improve data quality or reduce burden.
- Evaluate whether published reports and data provide information relevant to these changing circumstances, and point to new dissemination methods that would improve their relevance.

Criterion 2: The project benefits the Census Bureau by analyzing changing demographic, social, or economic trends that affect Census Bureau programs, especially those that evaluate or hold promise of improving the quality of Census Bureau products.

Explanation: The Census Bureau needs new data products such as new reports, on-line tools, public-use files, etc. to provide relevant information about changing demographic, social, or economic trends. New questions, surveys, data sources, and methods may be required to ensure that Census Bureau products continue to be relevant in a changing economy and society. Improving relevance enhances the quality of the Census Bureau's products.

Criterion 3: The project benefits the Census Bureau by developing a means of increasing the utility of Census Bureau data for analyzing or evaluating public programs, public policy, and/or demographic, economic, or social conditions.

Explanation: Census Bureau data are widely used to analyze existing and proposed public programs, to inform public policy decisions, and to investigate changing demographic, economic, and societal conditions. Publications and other public use data in their original forms may not produce the required information. In order to make the existing data useful, specific variables and data structures need to be developed. Constructing these variables and data structures allows the existing data to be used to address an expanded set of concerns.

Criterion 4: The project benefits the Census Bureau by facilitating data collection, processing or dissemination, including activities such as administrative support, information technology support, program oversight, or auditing under appropriate legal authorities.

Explanation: Projects may benefit the Census Bureau by improving the mission-enabling administrative functions that support our data collection work. This may require advice, collaboration, oversight, or direct involvement of persons who are not Census Bureau employees.

Predominant Benefits: Projects using Federal Tax Information must meet at least one criterion from 5-13 listed below.

Criterion 5: The project benefits the Census Bureau by helping to understand or improve the quality of data the Census Bureau collects or acquires.

Explanation: The Census Bureau needs to understand and continually assess the quality

of all the data it collects, and to seek ways to improve them. Understanding the limitations of and improving the quality of these input data can greatly expand their utility and the quality of the analyses they inform.

Criterion 6: The project benefits the Census Bureau by leading to new or improved methodology to collect or tabulate data.

Explanation: Continual assessment of the Census Bureau's current practices and analysis of our previous practices is necessary, due to changing economic and social circumstances, and the development of new statistical and economic methodologies. Using these data to improve of our methodologies ensures the continued relevance of our data and programs.

Criterion 7: The project benefits the Census Bureau by enhancing the data it collects, acquires, or publishes. This includes, but is not limited to:

- A. Improving imputations for non-response;
- B. Developing links across time or entities for data gathered in censuses and surveys;

Explanation: The collection of Title 13 data involves a substantial investment of resources and taxpayer dollars. Applying new techniques to improve the quality of these data increases the value of these investments. Insights drawn from linked data may inform future data collections.

Criterion 8: The project benefits the Census Bureau by identifying the limitations of, or improving the underlying Business Register, household Master Address File, and industrial and geographical classification schemes used to collect and code the data.

Explanation: The Census Bureau must evaluate whether emerging new social and economic patterns reduce the integrity of our household or business sampling frames (such as the Business Register, or Master Address File). Sources to produce robust sampling frames and classification schemes are critical to ensuring the Census Bureau's data collections are relevant and cost-effective.

Criterion 9: The project benefits the Census Bureau by identifying the shortcomings of current data collection programs and/or documenting new data needs.

Explanation: These projects benefit the Census Bureau by evaluating whether our programs collect sufficient information to address important social, demographic, or economic questions. These analyses are essential to ensure that the Census Bureau's data products are timely and relevant.

Criterion 10: The project benefits the Census Bureau by constructing, verifying, or improving the sampling frame for a Census Bureau data collection.

Explanation: Sampling frames are a fundamental building block for Census Bureau data collections. Continually evolving economic and social circumstances affect the appropriateness and completeness of existing and potential frames, and continual changes in statistical tools and methods affect the best practice techniques for using

those frames.

Criterion 11: The project benefits the Census Bureau by preparing population estimates and describing characteristics of the population.

Explanation: These projects develop estimates for relevant population and subgroup characteristics that augment the Census Bureau's existing publications and projects to provide more complete and relevant data products.

Criterion 12: The project benefits the Census Bureau by developing methods to address census or survey non-response to improve estimates.

Explanation: Understanding patterns of nonresponse, and its sources, is of great importance to the Census Bureau because response rates are an important indicator of data quality. Nonresponse is so important to data quality that the Census Bureau initiated, participates actively in, and supports, long-standing interagency groups that jointly explore better measures of response rates, sources of nonresponse, and ways to improve response rates.

Criterion 13: The project benefits the Census Bureau by developing statistical weights for a data collection or analysis conducted by the Census Bureau.

Explanation: Appropriate weights are essential to correctly presenting data. These weights are critical for the usability and relevance of Census Bureau data analyses.

EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy is effective upon signature.

LEGAL AUTHORITIES

- Title 13 U.S.C.
- Title 26 U.S.C.

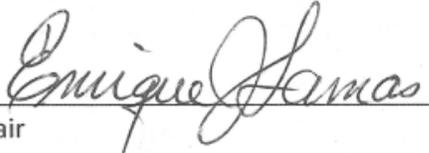
IMPLEMENTATION

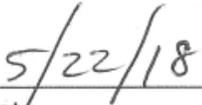
The Policy Coordination Office has the overall responsibility for implementing this policy. Project Contacts hold responsibility for creating documentation on Title 13 benefit statements and including the documentation in the project description.

POLICY OWNER

The Policy Coordination Office owns this policy.

SIGNATURE


Chair
Data Stewardship Executive Policy Committee
U.S. Census Bureau


Date

Summary Information	
Policy Title:	DS002 - Policy on Title 13 Benefit Statements
Date Signed:	5/22/2018
Last Reviewed:	5/17/2018 (Approved by DSEP)
Intended Audience:	All Staff, External Project Contacts
Policy Owner:	Policy Coordination Office
Office Responsible for Implementation:	Policy Coordination Office
Office Responsible for Dissemination:	Policy Coordination Office
Stakeholder Vetting:	IRS, PCO, Legal, DIPC, DSEP