

# DRAFT 2019-2020 Federal Data Strategy Action Plan

Co-created by Federal agencies and the public, coordinated, and edited  
by the *Cross-agency Priority Goal: Leveraging Data as a Strategic Asset*  
Federal Data Strategy development team



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## **Input Request: Draft 2019-2020 Federal Data Strategy Action Plan**

**Please provide comment on the scope and content of the 2019-2020 Federal Data Strategy Action Plan. The Federal Data Strategy development team will publish a final version of the 2019-2020 Federal Data Strategy Action Plan in September of 2019.**

1. Identify additional actions needed to implement the Federal Data Strategy that are not included in this draft Action Plan and explain why.
2. Identify additional actions that would align with or complement ongoing Federal data initiatives or the implementation of new legislation, such as the Foundations for Evidence-based Policy Making Act of 2018 and explain why.
3. Identify any actions in this draft Action Plan that should be considered for omission and explain why.
4. For each action, provide any edits and additional detail to ensure that they accurately and effectively describe needed activities, responsible entities, metrics for assessing progress, and timelines for completion.
5. For each action, provide information about the implementation resources necessary to ensure success of these action steps.

**Find out more about how to provide feedback at [Strategy.data.gov](https://strategy.data.gov).**

## Introduction

In June 2019, as a product of the collaborative *Cross-Agency Priority Goal: Leveraging Data as a Strategic Asset*<sup>1</sup>, the Office of Management and Budget issued the Federal Data Strategy (hereinafter “Strategy”).<sup>2</sup> The Strategy describes a ten-year vision for how the Federal government will accelerate the use of data to support the foundations of democracy, deliver on mission, serve the public, and steward resources while protecting security, privacy and confidentiality. The Strategy is comprised of three components to guide federal data management and use: a mission statement, 10 principles that serve as motivational guidelines for the overall Strategy, and a set of 40 practices to guide agencies on how to leverage the value of federal and federally sponsored data. The mission statement, principles, and practices are presented in final form in M-19-18, and additional detail regarding their development can be found at [Strategy.data.gov](https://strategy.data.gov).

Executive Branch agencies (hereinafter “agencies”)<sup>3</sup> shall implement the Federal Data Strategy by adhering to the requirements of each year’s annual government-wide Action Plan, which will identify priority action steps for a given year, incrementally build from year to year, and complement as needed requirements of new statute and policy. The priority of the 2019-2020 Federal Data Strategy Action Plan (hereinafter “Action Plan”) is to establish a firm basis of tools, processes, and capacities to leverage data as a strategic asset and align existing efforts. This Action Plan describes the steps that are viewed as fundamental during the first year in order to execute the full breadth of the Federal Data Strategy over time. They are informed by and build upon previous efforts, align with ongoing Federal Government programs and policies, and should complement new statutory requirements.<sup>4</sup>

By one year after the release of this Action Plan, the Federal Government will have begun to implement the Federal Data Strategy through a set of fundamental actions. Specifically,

- Designated entities will develop and share government-wide resources and/or tools for implementing the Federal Data Strategy related to governance, ethical data management and use, data protection, workforce training, streamlined access to federal data assets, and the establishment of data inventories and data cataloging.
- Specific federal communities will improve the management and use of specific data asset portfolios including geospatial data and financial management data.
- Federal agencies will begin working across silos to determine how they can better support their missions and serve stakeholders by making better use of the Federal Government’s full portfolio of data assets. Agencies will be investing in necessary infrastructure improvements, including workforce training and improvements related to data protection and access.

As the Federal Government undertakes these actions, there will be benefits to academia, industry, and the public as agencies use data to improve mission and service. The public will be better able to leverage

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<sup>1</sup> [Performance.gov/LeveragingData](https://performance.gov/leveragingdata)

<sup>2</sup> M-19-18, the Federal Data Strategy.

<sup>3</sup> “Agency” as defined in 44 U.S.C. §4502.

<sup>4</sup> Including the Paperwork Reduction Act, the E-Government Act of 2002, the Privacy Act of 1974, the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002 (FISMA), the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act of 2002 (CIPSEA), the Freedom of Information Act, the Information Quality Act, the Federal Records Act, Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018, among others.

federal data as a strategic asset through actions such as improved data inventories, catalogs, and streamlined application processes for external users to access certain valuable Federal data assets.

This Action Plan consists of 16 fundamental action steps. Each action step describes the desired result of successful implementation of the action step, identifies an entity responsible for executing the action, lists related Federal Data Strategy practices, establishes the identified metrics for measuring progress during the first year of implementation, and includes a timeline for completion of the action. Shared action steps, with the exception of Action 1 and 5, have received financial resources as part of the Cross-Agency Priority Goal: Leveraging Data as a Strategic Asset.<sup>5</sup> All other action steps are expected to be completed with current agency funding resources.

**Figure 1. Relationship between the Federal Data Strategy and the 2019-2020 Federal Data Action Plan**



Figure 1 depicts the Federal Data Strategy, which is comprised of three components: a mission statement, principles and practices, and the Action Plan, designed to implement fundamental aspects of the larger Strategy. The Action Plan includes three categories of actions, described below.

- **Shared** actions are led by a single agency or existing council for the benefit of all agencies and with available cross-agency resources. They provide government-wide thought leadership, direction, tools, and/or services for implementing the Federal Data Strategy. Funding is identified to implement each of the identified shared actions through the President’s Management Agenda.
- **Community** actions are taken by a group of agencies around a common topic, usually through an established cross-agency council or other existing coordinating mechanism, and with available cross-agency resources. They represent ongoing, mature, cross-agency priorities that will use the Federal Data Strategy practices and implementation guidance to more quickly and consistently achieve their goals.

<sup>5</sup> Federal Government Priority Goals (commonly referred to as the Cross-Agency Priority Goals, or CAP Goals) were established by the Government Performance and Results (GPRA) Modernization Act (31 U.S.C. 1120) and are set at the beginning of each Presidential term in consultation with Congress. In FY2017 and FY2018, a total of \$11.2 million were available each year to support CAP Goal projects under transfer authority provided by Congress.

- **Agency-specific** actions are taken by an individual agency and are designed to build capacity using currently available agency resources. They set expectations for progress and success in implementing the practices.

By focusing on a handful of specific actions at each level of data management and use, this Action Plan establishes an array of foundational actions designed to align activities and set a firm foundation of tools, processes, and capacity to leverage data as a strategic asset.

To support the Federal Data Strategy and this Action Plan, implementation guidance will be routinely updated on [Strategy.data.gov](https://strategy.data.gov).

## Shared Actions: Government-wide Data Services

### Action 1: Create an OMB Data Council

By November 2019, the Office of Management and Budget will establish a cross-office Data Council that will coordinate across statutory offices on information policy development and implementation activities and provide guidance on government-wide data standards and improvements required by statute, such as the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act, the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act (hereinafter “Evidence Act”), and the Geospatial Data Act. The OMB Data Council will also provide to agencies a coordinated voice (or response) and common guidance regarding the implementation of the Federal Data Strategy. OMB’s efforts to ensure relevant participants are engaged in data governance will be a model for individual agencies. The OMB Data Council will provide a way to address issues that cross agencies’ and OMB’s statutory functions to help inform government-wide management and budget priorities for data management and use.

**Responsible:** Office of Management and Budget

**Supported practice(s):** *Prioritize Data Governance*

**Measurement:** Internal Data Council established (Y/N)

Consistent governance approach developed (Y/N)

**Timeline:** Completed within 3 months

### Action 2: Develop a Curated Data Science Training and Credentialing Catalog

By February 2020, Federal agencies will have access to a curated catalog of federal and non-federal training offerings in data science, aligned to federal needs.

The General Services Administration (GSA), with federal and non-federal stakeholder input, will create an inventory of data science training and credentialing opportunities used by and available to federal agencies. The catalog will relate training and credentialing to career paths, including on-ramps for federal employees at various stages of development and interest and will describe the required education and expertise to advance to the next stage of training. The catalog will provide federal employees with the beginnings of a roadmap for how data science training and credentialing can match their development goals. This Action will work in tandem with Action 14 to ensure agencies have sufficient hiring and reskilling options to leverage data as a strategic asset.

This shared action has received financial resources as part of the Cross-Agency Priority Goal: Leveraging Data as a Strategic Asset and a GSA responsible party has been assigned.

**Responsible:** General Services Administration

**Supported practice(s):** *Increase Capacity for Data Management and Analysis*

**Measurement:** Number of agencies and employees that use the catalog

**Timeline:** Completed within 6 months

### Action 3: Develop a Data Ethics Framework

By November 2019, the Federal Government will have available a consistent framework for evaluating ethical repercussions and tradeoffs associated with data management and use.

GSA will work with academia, professional associations, and federal data stakeholders to create a Data Ethics Framework that provides key decision points and considerations for ethical data management and use that go beyond legal requirements and supports the Federal Data Strategy principles. Specifically, GSA will research relevant ethical frameworks for data management and use, will then conduct stakeholder feedback on a draft Data Ethics Framework alongside academic and professional association partners, and finally will publish and promote the Data Ethics Framework for the Federal Government. This framework will build on fitness for use assessments, including potential use in automated technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). This framework will be updated as needed in future Action Plans.

This shared action has received financial resources as part of the Cross-Agency Priority Goal: Leveraging Data as a Strategic Asset and a GSA responsible party has been assigned.

**Responsible:** General Services Administration

**Supported practice(s):** *Prioritize Data Governance* and others

**Measurement:** Data Ethics Framework Created (Y/N)

**Timeline:** Completed within 3 months

### Action 4: Develop a Data Protection Toolkit

By August 2020, the Federal Government will have developed a consistent approach for measuring and mitigating the risk of re-identification from the release of disparate data sets, often referred to as the “mosaic effect.”

The Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology will update *Statistical Working Paper 22: Report on Statistical Disclosure Limitation Methodology* and will collaborate with the Department of Education to create a re-identification risk assessment toolkit for federal agencies. It will include templates based on best practices for assessing, managing, and mitigating the risk that individuals or enterprises are re-identified from the release of confidential federal data. It also will array a suite of approaches for safely accessing data while accounting for confidentiality concerns, from fully open to restricted access in data enclaves. The toolkit will be designed as a user-friendly website in support of both more and less technical users.

This shared action has received financial resources as part of the Cross-Agency Priority Goal: Leveraging Data as a Strategic Asset and a Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology responsible party has been assigned.

**Responsible:** Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology, with direction from the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy, and the Department of Education

**Supported practice(s):** *Review Data Releases for Disclosure Risk; Diversify Data Access Methods*

**Measurement:** Reference material published within 12 months (Y/N)

**Timeline:** Completed within 12 months

### Action 5: Develop a Repository of Federal Data Strategy Resources and Tools

By November 2019, GSA will create a government-wide repository of tools and resources to assist agencies with implementing the Federal Data Strategy, as well as companion efforts, such as implementing the Evidence Act. The repository may include more detailed practice descriptions, case studies that demonstrate the practices “in action,” and tool kits for implementing individual or groups of practices. The Federal Data Strategy is seeking comments on priorities for populating the repository.

**Responsible:** General Services Administration

**Supported practice(s):** *All practices.*

**Measurement:** Number of agencies that access and use the tool within 3/6/9/12 months

**Timeline:** Completed within 3 months

### Action 6: Pilot a One-stop Standard Research Application

By August 2020, the Federal Government will pilot a one-stop standard application for accessing federal data assets for research and other evidence building purposes.

The Federal Statistical Research Data Center Program Management Office at the U.S. Census Bureau, in collaboration with member agencies and others with active researcher access programs, will develop an automated and streamlined research application (analogous to TSA Pre-check or Global Entry) that would provide a standardized approach for qualified and trained researchers to access agency data that cannot be made public and would reduce the paperwork burden resulting from duplicative forms. This approach would have the added benefit of also holistically setting consistent and appropriate access requirements and data security and privacy protocols in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.

This shared action has received financial resources as part of the Cross-Agency Priority Goal: Leveraging Data as a Strategic Asset and a U.S. Census Bureau responsible party has been assigned.

**Responsible:** The Federal Statistical Research Data Center Program Management Office, U.S. Census Bureau, Department of Commerce under the direction of the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy.

**Supported practice(s):** *Diversify Data Access Methods*

**Measurement:** Number of agencies' requirements harmonized into application



**Timeline:** Completed within 12 months

### Action 7: Pilot an Automated Inventory Tool for Data.gov

By August 2020, the Federal Government will have an automated tool that leverages agency Information Collection Review (ICR) processes and documentation under the Paperwork Reduction Act and possibly other existing sources, to populate metadata, or information about each dataset, on agency enterprise data inventories. This automation tool will complement the inventory requirements under the Evidence Act.

This action will begin a multi-year process of deploying an automated approach to populating needed information on agency data inventories in order to address public, cross-agency and intra-agency needs for data discovery and access, leveraging existing processes to the extent feasible. Discovery includes the capacity to identify duplication in a manner that helps to avert unnecessary collections and promotes collaboration to leverage single collections for multiple benefits. Discovery and access both include sufficient metadata to understand whether the data is collected under a pledge of confidentiality or privacy and, if so, whether restricted access versions of the data are available. Inputs to the automated data collection inventory include, but are not limited to, existing processes such as the ICR process required of agencies and OMB under the Paperwork Reduction Act, with a particular focus on OMB control numbers as an identifier and ICR packages as sources of metadata.

This shared action has received financial resources as part of the Cross-Agency Priority Goal: Leveraging Data as a Strategic Asset and a Department of Education responsible party has been assigned and work is currently underway to execute this goal.

**Responsible:** National Center for Education Statistics, Department of Education

**Supported practice(s):** *Inventory Datasets*

**Measurement:** New capture and review tool developed and tested at two agencies (Y/N)

Multi-agency stakeholder input on functionality of user interface obtained (Y/N)

**Timeline:** Completed within 12 months

### Action 8: Pilot Standard Data Catalogs for Data.gov

By February 2020, the Federal Government will have an improved standard Federal Data Catalog kit pilot for metadata management and data hosting capabilities, in support of legally required federal data catalog requirements. This automation tool will complement the inventory and Federal Data Catalogue requirements under the Foundations for Evidence-based Policymaking Act.

The General Services Administration will create a government-wide data catalog platform pilot with a shared code base and cloud hosting that agencies can install quickly and cheaply, and that is customizable enough to support agency needs, leveraging Data.gov's existing open source codebase and modern container/plugin techniques. This approach will provide cost savings across the Federal Government's hosting and management of data catalogs, create more complete and sophisticated federal data catalogs with advanced features such as automated quality assurance, and result in increased use and improved user experience for the public and agencies.

This shared action has received financial resources as part of the Cross-Agency Priority Goal: Leveraging Data as a Strategic Asset and a GSA responsible party has been assigned and work is currently underway to execute this goal.

**Responsible:** General Services Administration

**Supported practice(s):** *Inventory Datasets*

**Measurement:** Number of CFO agencies that implement the tool within 3/6/9/12 months  
Number of additional datasets on or available through Data.gov

**Timeline:** Completed within 6 months

## Community Actions: Cross-Agency Collaboration

### Action 9: Improve Data Resources for AI Research and Development

By February 2020, the Federal Government, through the implementation of Executive Order on Maintaining American Leadership in Artificial Intelligence<sup>6</sup>, will have improved the data and computing resources for AI Research and Development, by:

- All agencies shall review their Federal data and models to identify opportunities to increase access and use by the greater non-Federal AI research community in a manner that benefits that community, while protecting safety, security, privacy, and confidentiality based on OMB guidance and in response to public feedback (see Action 16). Specifically, agencies shall improve data and model inventory documentation to enable discovery and usability, and shall prioritize improvements to access and quality of AI data and models based on the AI research community's user feedback.

**Responsible:** All Agencies

**Supported practice(s):** *Promote Wide Access*

**Measurement:** See data.gov and code.gov

**Timeline:** Completed within 6 months

### Action 10: Improve Financial Management Data Standards

By August 2020, the Federal Government, through the implementation of the President's Management Agenda<sup>7</sup>, will have improved the management and use of several financial management data assets, by:

- **Getting Payments Right:** The Federal Government will reduce the amount of cash lost to the taxpayer through incorrect payments; clarify and streamline reporting and compliance requirements to focus on actions that make a difference; and partner with states to address improper payments in programs that they administer using federal funds.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/executive-order-maintaining-american-leadership-artificial-intelligence/>

<sup>7</sup> [Performance.gov/PMA/PMA.html](https://www.performance.gov/PMA/PMA.html)

- **Result Oriented Accountability for Grants:** The Federal Government will rebalance compliance efforts with a focus on results for the American taxpayer; standardize grant reporting data and improve data collection in ways that will increase efficiency, promote evaluation, reduce reporting burden, and benefit the American taxpayer; measure progress and share lessons learned and best practices to inform future efforts, and support innovation to achieve results.
- **Federal IT Spending Transparency:** The Federal Government will improve business, financial, and acquisition outcomes; enable federal executives to make data-driven decisions and analyze trade-offs between cost, quality, and value of IT investments; reduce agency burden for reporting IT budget, spend, and performance data by automating the use of authoritative data sources; and enable IT benchmarking across Federal Government agencies and with other public and private sector organizations.

**Responsible:** President’s Management Council

**Supported practice(s):** *Prioritize Data Governance; Leverage Data Standards*

**Measurement:** See Performance.gov/PMA/PMA for detailed metrics

**Timeline:** Completed within 12 months

### Action 11: Improve Geospatial Data Standards

By August 2020, the Federal Government will have improved geospatial data standards for all Federal Geospatial Data Committee (FGDC) data themes.

The Geospatial Data Act requires the FGDC to establish standards for each of the National Geospatial Data Asset data themes and content standards for metadata, consistent with international standards and with public feedback, excluding public disclosure of any information that reasonably could be expected to cause damage to the national interest, security, or defense of the nation.

**Responsible:** Federal Geospatial Data Committee

**Supported practice(s):** *Prioritize Data Governance; Leverage Data Standards*

**Measurement:** Number of FGDC data themes with improved geospatial data standards

Established content standards for metadata (Y/N)

**Timeline:** Completed within 12 months

## Agency-Specific Actions: Agency Activities

### Action 12: Constitute a Diverse Data Governance Body

By September 2019, all agencies will have established an appropriately inclusive and empowered data governance body to ensure that agency resources are aligned with agency priorities based on a maturity assessment and mission needs.

All agencies will charter and constitute a data governance body driven by chief data officers (as required by the Evidence Act) with participation from Senior Executives in agency business units, and agency-

wide data support functions such as policy leaders, general counsels, privacy officers, statistical advisors, evaluation officers, and chief information officers. Convening appropriate senior level staff and technical experts to discuss data resources, set policy, and recommend future investments may have many benefits including: increasing transparency and trust about the data brought to bear in decision-making, aligning goals and procedures to protect privacy and secure data, and reducing the resources needed for data management through new efficiencies. An agency data governance structure—variously called data governance board, data council, and data stewardship committee—identifies the scope of the data that needs to be managed and specifies policies, standards, reporting structures, and roles for data management. The board uses data maturity models to assess agency capabilities and seeks meaningful and broad agency input before recommending data investment priorities. It ensures the monitoring of and compliance with policies, standards, and responsibilities throughout the information lifecycle.

**Responsible:** All agencies

**Supported practice(s):** *Prioritize Data Governance*

**Measurement:** Established diverse and empowered governance board (Y/N)

Number of actions taken by body each quarter

**Timeline:** Completed within 1 month

### Action 13: Assess Data and Related Infrastructure Maturity

By May 2020, all agencies will conduct an initial maturity assessment focusing on data and data infrastructure (e.g. organizational structures and knowledge bases, policies, workforce skills) needed to answer agency priority questions and to set a baseline for future improvements. This assessment will identify readiness to meet other requirements of the Federal Data Strategy and related legal requirements. It can be used to make investment decisions and to prioritize subsequent action steps.

**Responsible:** All agencies

**Supported practice(s):** *Assess Maturity*

**Measurement:** Agency chief data officer and others have participated in any federally-provided training or technical assistance (Y/N)

Assessment documented and available (Y/N)

**Timeline:** Completed within 9 months

### Action 14: Identify Opportunities to Increase Staff Data Skills

By May 2020, agencies will have begun to identify critical data skills required to support high quality analysis and evaluation, data management, and privacy protection.

Data-driven decision-making requires not only accessible, high quality data but also a workforce with adequate knowledge of data security practices and data skills, including data science, statistics, and program evaluation, to leverage insights from data while also safeguarding protected information. In an increasingly complex and data-saturated decision landscape, even staff who traditionally have not

employed data in their day-to-day functioning will be better able to meet critical business needs by attaining at least basic data literacy skills.

Achieving parity between skill needs and workforce capacity is an ongoing process involving several sequential steps:

1. Identifying critical data skills for the agency (and relevant sub-units) in the areas of analysis and evaluation, data management, and privacy protection;
2. Assessing current staff capacity for critical data skills including by surveying survey staff for unseen skills (and skills that may not be related to employees' job series); and
3. Developing an initial plan to address gaps between critical data skill needs and current capacity.

The identification of critical data skills will naturally be informed by the determination of agency key questions, and aided by the Data Science catalog created by GSA, but thoughtful consideration should be given to the less visible data skill needs of staff performing non-traditional data roles (such as IT, communications, and finance) as well as the needs of staff fulfilling more traditional programming and analysis functions. An initial plan to address identified skill gaps should establish a mechanism for providing the time and resources staff need to learn and apply new skills. This plan should leverage options for increasing staff capacity, such as acquiring easy-to-use tools and dashboards, making available additional training and educational opportunities, taking advantage of on-the-job learning experiences, participating in intentional data communities, and capitalizing on hiring and retention flexibilities.

**Responsible:** All agencies

**Supported practice(s):** *Use Data to Guide Decision-Making and Increase Capacity for Data Management and Analysis*

**Measurement:** Agency has identified critical data skills, assessed current staff capacity, and developed an initial plan to reskill their workforce or hire to meet their data demands (Y/N)

**Timeline:** Completed within 9 months

### Action 15: Identify Data Needs to Answer Key Agency Questions

By August 2020, all agencies will take initial steps to identify the data needed to answer key questions of interest to the agency.

The learning agenda<sup>8</sup> process is one critical tool to help agencies identify and prioritize the data needed to answer key agency questions by engaging senior leaders and stakeholders. By focusing on the priority questions, agencies will consider what data are currently available; any issues around data quality or coverage; and if data are not available, how they might be collected or acquired.

**Responsible:** All agencies

**Supported practice(s):** *Identify Data Needs to Answer Key Agency Questions; Champion Data Use; Prioritize Data Governance; Govern Data to Protect Confidentiality and Privacy*

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<sup>8</sup> Learning agendas are also known as evidence-building plans, such as in the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act.

**Measurement:** Agency has engaged stakeholders and consulted with key leaders, such as Chief Data Officers, to begin identifying the data needed to answer key agency questions (Y/N)

Agency has categorized data needs for key questions by data type (Y/N)

**Timeline:** Completed within 12 months

### Action 16: Identify Priority Datasets for Agency Open Data Plans

By August 2020, agencies will identify then use their initial list of highest priority datasets as the focus for enhancing their data inventories and catalogs and approaches to secure data access and sharing.

Agencies will identify an initial set of priority agency datasets that are key to mission success and/or a priority for stakeholders outside of the agency. These datasets can be the initial focus for testing and implementing improvements to agency comprehensive data inventories and catalogs, as required by the Evidence Act, as well as for improving secure processes for data access and sharing, for concretely engaging stakeholders to help them understand and use federal data, and for obtaining effective feedback on the agency's planning processes to improve open data access.

**Responsible:** All agencies

**Supported practice(s):** *Promote Wide Access*

**Measurement:** Priority agency datasets identified with stakeholder input (Y/N)

Plan for sharing priority agency datasets developed with the engagement of stakeholders (Y/N)

**Timeline:** Completed within 12 months