

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR



Enterprise Data Strategy



FOREWORD

Let me thank the amazing public servants who helped craft this inaugural data strategy for the Department of Labor, in particular our Chief Data Officer Scott Gibbons and the entire team at our Office of Data Governance, along with our Chief Innovation Officer Chike Aguh.

Since I came to the department, I have asked my team to unleash their full power—to take every tool, our statutory authority, rules and regulations, funding, and the incredible talent we have across the country and unleash it every single day for the good of America’s working people.

Too often, an assumption in government is, *I need a change in the law to do this, or the only way to make a real impact is with more money, or if I could hire more people, we could make this happen*, instead of focusing on the tremendous power we already have and the many ways we are not fully utilizing it in service to our mission. This includes examining all the ways we have tied our own hands, interpreted policies and authorities too narrowly, been too afraid to try a new way of operating. In assessing organizational risk, I ask that we examine not just the risk of certain activities—which is important—but the risk of not acting.

Data is truly one of the superpowers of the Department of Labor. That superpower allows us to move the needle on critical goals for American workers:

- **Job Quality:** Since the start of the Biden-Harris administration, it has been clear that one of the most important tasks before us is getting Americans back to work (or into work for the first time) after the pandemic. We resolved to help provide them with not just any jobs, but quality jobs that pay family sustaining wages; ensure security, dignity and respect; and provide a path to the American Dream. This is why the department worked to create the first-of-its-kind Job Quality Measurement Initiative with various foundations to define and advance job quality at scale across our economy.
- **Equity:** As evidenced by President Biden signing his Executive Order on Equity on day one and by our department’s equity strategy, we are committed to ensuring that every American worker is protected, respected and advancing in this economy. To do this, we are lifting up the needs and voices of workers from communities who have been overlooked: workers of color, immigrants, women, workers with disabilities, those living in concentrated poverty, and those in rural and/or low-income communities. We do this not simply because it is the right thing to do but because building an inclusive economy measured by the experiences of these workers is the way to make sure no one is left behind. Data is critical to fulfilling our aims here. In addition to planning our work through the collection and evaluation of reliable data, we are committed to making data available. The Bureau of Labor Statistics is now publishing monthly jobs data on Native American and Native Alaskan workers and working on disaggregating demographic data for the nation’s Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities, which are diverse and have different needs and economic outcomes.

This data strategy builds on these examples and many others happening all over the department. Per our strategy, we will make our data findable by anyone, accessible to all, interoperable across siloes, and reusable across time. Beyond that, we will work to find ways to put this data into the hands of workers themselves, to empower them to make decisions that will improve their lives.

Ending where I began, I want to thank all those who worked to bring this strategy to life, and I want to offer even deeper thanks to those who will use this data to improve life for all of us. We will unleash the full power of data at the Department of Labor and leverage it on behalf of the workers we serve. Thank you.

Julie Su
Deputy Secretary of Labor

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This data strategy guides current and prospective efforts across the Department of Labor (DOL) to create and improve capabilities that support better alignment of data operations, more effective data management, and greater use of data to inform program administration and decision-making. Aligning disparate data definitions, collections, and management processes to allow their products to integrate and function effectively is a challenge, but one with clear solutions that require a unified approach to improving data, people, culture, analytics, and technology. By identifying clear and realistic goals that are expected to bring value by harmonizing and optimizing data operations, working to improve data governance through objective measures of progress and value, and improving data production, DOL builds capabilities for data to inform and support decision making.

This three-year strategy builds off the foundation of missions and laws that guide the Department and is composed of four guiding principles and five goals that can develop more consistent and effective data governance and align Departmental and agency planning to improve data management and use capabilities. The four guiding principles are (1) making data findable, (2) making data accessible, (3) making data interoperable, and (4) making data reusable; or the FAIR principles for short. The five strategic goals are: (1) ensuring data are managed to be open by default, (2) ensuring data are comprehensible, (3) ensuring data are fit for purpose, (4) ensuring data are available in consistent and predictable ways, and (5) managing data as an enterprise asset, incorporate stakeholder input, and as appropriate, made public in ways that provide real benefit to data users. Taken together, the foundation, principles, and goals form a strategy that should guide decision-making, project planning, and data governance, and incrementally improve the state of data at DOL. The strategy concludes with focused areas for improvement at the agency and Departmental levels including (1) ensuring data quality, (2) building and maintaining data talent, (3) integration of data into existing agency management and planning systems to create a practical and realizable path forward, and (4) expanding the data capabilities for producing sophisticated analytics.

BACKGROUND FOR THE DOL DATA STRATEGY

DOL is composed of agencies with varying missions, programs, and organizational structures, with each producing data in response to diverse mandates, laws, and policies. Creating data that can serve as a strategic asset across such an enterprise requires a strong focus on the quality, availability, and utility of such data. Data products that are consistent in format and content increase value by making it easier to find patterns and trends that are relevant to program administration, and reduce the costs and complexity of analysis through efficient and predictable use. High-quality data are essential to understanding the effectiveness of DOL programs, the beneficiaries and stakeholders impacted by those programs, and the degree to which we meet our missions.

Numerous factors shape the manner and extent to which Federal agencies leverage data as a strategic asset: the laws and policies governing data they generate or use; the missions, methods, and stakeholders; the capabilities in the data infrastructure; and their organizational data culture. Data culture is a particularly important factor, encompassing how the agency perceives, defines, collects, and manages data, and the data acumen and skills among staff to leverage data.

Legal and Policy Context

Recent laws and policies covering Federal data management¹ have challenged Federal agencies to evaluate and improve how data are treated as a strategic asset and made broadly available to stakeholders. Federal agencies are reconsidering the role that data can play in guiding the planning, operations, budget, and management of programs. Federal policies, including executive orders expanding the role for data in supporting

¹ Including but not limited to the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018, the Geospatial Data Act of 2018, the Grant Reporting Efficiency and Agreements Transparency Act of 2019, and the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014

artificial intelligence², scientific integrity³, and equity⁴, along with the Federal Data Strategy⁵, similarly seek to align agencies in the ways they seek to build data capacity. The complexity of this agenda necessitates that Federal agencies assess their current data infrastructure and capacity, identify areas to improve and align, and develop methods to mature their ability to define, collect, manage, use, and share data.

Assessments of the Current State of Data

During fiscal year (FY) 2020, DOL's Data Board conducted two assessments of DOL's infrastructure, capacities, and processes. The first was a data management maturity model assessment of capabilities including data management, human capital, data culture, analytics, and technological capabilities. The assessment ranked DOL's capabilities as developing, with the lowest scores in the broad areas of human capital and technology. The second was a data skills assessment, fielded within a maturity model framework that looked at a variety of capabilities fundamental to effective data management and use. The skills assessment identified specific areas to focus on for improvement including building data talent to better access, visualize, and analyze data. During 2022, DOL should release its first evidence capacity assessment describing DOL's ability to generate and use scientific information including statistics, evaluation, research, and analysis to inform policy, planning, and program administration. These assessments have shown that while DOL is rich in data assets, it has additional work to do to bring the full potential of those assets to the stakeholders that we serve. The assessments provide an objective benchmark of strengths and weaknesses to guide planning and strategy, and ensure DOL can target actions to remediate known weaknesses and provide tangible and necessary improvements.

² <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/02/14/2019-02544/maintaining-american-leadership-in-artificial-intelligence>

³ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/memorandum-on-restoring-trust-in-government-through-scientific-integrity-and-evidence-based-policymaking/>

⁴ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/executive-order-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/>

⁵ <https://strategy.data.gov/>

“As the Department’s Evidence Officials, we recognize the vital role this strategy plays in promoting evidence-based decision-making. Increasingly, our success in accomplishing the Department’s mission is dependent on recognizing the essential role data has in understanding the populations we serve, the current and emerging challenges those populations face, and providing an objective basis for efficiently and effectively targeting our resources and efforts to those most in need. Data are central to assessing the state of workers and the workforce, the impacts of Department of Labor programs, and providing transparency into our actions and the impacts that result. This Enterprise Data Strategy brings a more central focus to the need for quality, consistency, and availability of data to inform and influence how DOL carries out its mission. This strategy will guide efforts to improve Federal data management in predictable and consistent ways, and best position us to leverage those improvements to produce evidence that can guide strategic planning and program administration, inform policy and support data-informed decisions.”

— Department of Labor Evidence Act Officials: Chief Evaluation Officer Dr. Christina Yancey, Chief Data Officer Mr. Scott Gibbons, BLS Commissioner of Labor Statistics Dr. William Beach, and Director of the Performance Management Center Mr. Dennis Johnson

“As Chief Information Officer, the OCIO is in support of DOL’s Data Strategy. It aligns with OCIO’s goal to get the right data, to the right people, at the right time in a secure manner. OCIO provides enterprise-wide data and analytics services and is building a modern data platform for DOL’s agencies to advance mission and drive innovation. The DOL Data Strategy, coupled with leadership engagement and an enabling operational plan, will help OCIO accelerate the centralization and integration of DOL data to achieve operational efficiencies and improved insights in support of evidenced based decision making and alignment with DOL modernization activities.”

— Department of Labor Chief Information Officer Gundeep Ahluwalia

SUMMARY

Modernizing perspectives on the value of data and increasing the sophistication of DOL data operations requires a comprehensive approach that includes working with data, people, culture, analytics, and technology. DOL should take a comprehensive approach to reframe the role of data that includes reinforcing the importance of designing for quality, accessibility, and utility in infrastructure, ensuring the quality and utility of data are appropriately central to emerging priorities, and maintaining focus on who we serve with our data.

Whether the intent is to optimize internal program operations, provide transparency into the impacts and beneficiaries of governmental programs, or create greater value for all public, private, and governmental data users, DOL should place a more central focus on ensuring that data provide maximum value, can be conveniently found, comprehensively understood, and confidently used. Findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable data promote the delivery of efficient and effective services to the public, advances the management of Government information as an asset, and fuels entrepreneurship, innovation, and scientific discovery that optimally supports administration of DOL programs, meets agency mission, and brings benefit to DOL's core customers.

