



ASA strategies for measuring and communicating the value of official statistics

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Abstract:

Government leaders know official statistics are vital to successfully administer government in the twenty-first century. Yet they often struggle to communicate their value to stakeholders—especially nonexpert funders, such as legislatures, philanthropists, and the public, who must choose among a variety of worthy causes without the relevant domain or data expertise.

The communication problem stems from the fact that official statistics are public goods whose value cannot be easily determined; were value easily determined, these goods would attract private investment, eliminating the need for government funding in the first place. Without an objective basis to compare value, official statistics are often shelved for flashy alternatives that promise policy solutions today without laborious data collection and cleaning operations or risk of privacy violations.

We review strategies used by the American Statistical Association's Office of Science Policy to measure and communicate the value of official statistics to nonexperts. Our review covers a variety of Science Policy functions, including social media marketing, opinion pieces, technical reports, and government communications, such as budget recommendations and amicus briefs.