

AMERICAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION ENDORSES FIFTH EDITION OF *PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES FOR A FEDERAL STATISTICAL AGENCY*

ALEXANDRIA, VA, August 29, 2013—The American Statistical Association (ASA) Board of Directors unanimously endorsed *Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency* (Fifth Edition) during its meeting earlier this month.

The publication is a project of the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT), a standing unit of the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council. *Principles and Practices* initially was developed in response to requests for CNSTAT to provide advice on what constitutes an effective federal government statistical agency.

The first edition of the book was published in 1992, and updated editions were published in 2001, 2005 and 2009, respectively. CNSTAT began updating the book every four years, with the second edition in 2001, to provide the most current edition to newly appointed cabinet secretaries at the beginning of each presidential administration.

“Principles and Practices is the definitive resource for creating and managing a credible, independent federal statistical agency,” said Marie Davidian, ASA president and William Neal Reynolds Professor of Statistics at North Carolina State University. *“This informative book—developed and updated by CNSTAT members and staff with input from experienced federal government statisticians—further builds on the years of collective experience and insight that have been incorporated into previous editions. This endorsement by the ASA Board of Directors represents the association’s longstanding and strong support for all federal statistical agencies and their employees.”*

Principles and Practices has been widely cited and used by numerous federal agencies and the U.S. Congress. For instance, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget cites the book in its guidance, while the U.S. General Accountability Office uses it as a benchmark in reports to the legislative branch. Additionally, federal statistical agencies use it to inform new appointees, advisory committee members, congressional members and their staffers, their own staffers and other interested parties about what constitutes an effective and credible statistical organization.

The fifth edition presents and explores in detail four fundamental principles each federal statistical agency must employ to successfully carry out its mission. Those principles are that a federal statistical agency must:

1. **Produce objective data that are relevant to policy issues**—A statistical agency must provide information that is relevant to issues of public policy and useful to a broad range of public- and private-sector users, including the general public.
2. **Develop and retain credibility among data users**—Because few data users are in a position to verify the completeness and accuracy of statistical information, they must rely on an agency’s reputation as a source of accurate and useful statistics that are free from political and other undue external influence.
3. **Build trust among data providers**—Data providers, such as survey respondents and custodians of administrative records, must trust that the information they provide to a statistical agency will be used only for the purposes the agency has described.
4. **Achieve and maintain a strong position of independence from the appearance and reality of political control**—To be credible and unhindered in its mission, a statistical agency must maintain a widely acknowledged position of independence from undue external influence.

The book also discusses at length 13 important practices that are the means for statistical agencies to implement the four fundamental principles. These practices include:

1. Clearly defined and well-accepted mission
2. Continual development of more useful data
3. Openness about sources and limitations of the data provided
4. Commitment to quality and professional standards of practice
5. A strong internal and external evaluation program
6. Coordination and collaboration with other statistical agencies
7. Necessary authority to protect its independence

New to the fifth edition is added emphasis on the need for federal statistical agencies not only to seek out new ways of using multiple data sources—such as administrative records, private-sector data sets and selected Internet sources in addition to surveys—but also to find new ways to integrate their activities with those of other agencies.

Copies of *Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency* (Fifth Edition) can be ordered online from The National Academies Press at www.nap.edu.

About the American Statistical Association

The American Statistical Association is the world’s largest community of statisticians and the second-oldest continuously operating professional society in the United States. Its members serve in industry, government and academia in more than 90 countries, advancing research and promoting sound statistical practice to inform public policy and improve human welfare. For additional information about the American Statistical Association, please visit the ASA website at www.amstat.org.

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