Summary of an ASA Roundtable on Revitalized National Center for Education Statistics: Think Tanks and Data Policy Groups

Held virtually October 28, 2025
December 9, 2025

Section 1: Overview and Context

The American Statistical Association convened this virtual roundtable with the primary objective of identifying common ground and differences on recommendations for making the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) more agile, efficient, and accountable. The discussion was designed to take both short- and long-term approaches, including consideration of changes to NCES's authorizing legislation, the Educational Sciences Reform Act of 2002 (ESRA). This roundtable, made possible with support from the Lumina Foundation, featured representatives of think tanks and data policy groups who are listed in the box to the right.

Moderator Nancy Potok emphasized that the focus would be on "high level principles, strategies, and perspectives about how to enable an efficient, agile, and accountable NCES, able to meet critical information needs." The session aimed to accomplish several goals: identify areas of consensus on NCES's future direction, surface significant disagreements requiring further discussion, and lay a foundation for ongoing engagement.

At the start of the roundtable, participants were asked to identify NCES products they have used or value highly and to describe desired attributes for a revitalized NCES. The most mentioned products were National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP); Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); and Common Core of Data (CCD). Participants also mentioned National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), Beginning Postsecondary

Students Longitudinal Survey, B&B (Baccalaureate and Beyond), Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), EDFacts, international comparisons (PISA, TIMSS, PIAAC), Condition of Education, Digest of Education Statistics, and Education Demographic and Geographic (EDGE).

During introductions, participants were asked what they would like to see in NCES or its products. Their responses included the following and were generally consistent with the discussion later in the roundtable:

1. Timeliness and speed
2. Accessibility and usability for diverse audiences
3. More actionable data: interoperability, AI/machine readable, data tools and resources

Following introductions, former Commissioners Carr and Woodworth presented their joint vision for a revitalized NCES (summarized in Section 2), which was followed by discussions of their vision and that of others, the themes (summarized in Section 3) and next steps (Section 4).

Moderator: Nancy Potok, CEO, NAPx Consulting; Chief Statistician of the United States, 2017-2020.
Participants:
1. Jim Blew, Co-Founder, Defense of Freedom Institute for Policy Studies
2. Peggy Carr, NCES Commissioner, 2021-2025
3. Jay Greene, Senior Research Fellow, Center for Education Policy, Heritage Foundation
4. Nick Hart, President and CEO, Data Foundation
5. Nat Malkus, Senior Fellow and Deputy Director, Education Policy Studies, American Enterprise Institute
6. Kate Tromble, Vice President, Federal Policy, Data Quality Campaign
7. Erin Velez, Vice President of Research, Institute for Higher Education Policy
8. Christy Wolfe, Director of K-12 Policy, Bipartisan Policy Center
9. Lynn Woodworth, NCES Commissioner, 2018-2021; Research Faculty, Institute for Governance and Civics, Florida State University

Section 2: Former Commissioners' Vision

Lynn Woodworth and Peggy Carr's presentation laid out a vision for a revitalized National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), emphasizing a core federal role for collecting and reporting education data based on its original 1867 mandate to provide data that shows the "condition and progress of education".

Their vision is anchored in five principal functions for the renewed NCES:

1. Integrity of Data and Methods: NCES must remain the trusted source of accurate, reliable, and credible data, adhering to rigorous statistical and psychometric standards.
2. Statistical Independence and Transparency: The agency must be free from political interference in its statistical work, ensuring timely and equitable data releases. They stressed a clear separation between the statistical release of data and any subsequent policy commentary.
3. Comprehensive Picture: The core function is to provide an unvarnished, comprehensive portrait of the education landscape across populations, geographies, and generations.
4. Relevance and Utility: Data must be made accessible and understandable for a wide array of stakeholders, including state and local education agencies (SEAs/LEAs), students, parents, all branches of the federal government, and researchers.

5. Public Trust: NCES must uphold public trust, focusing on privacy, trust, and confidentiality—a key ethical component of federal statistics.

Woodworth and Carr identified several structural challenges hindering NCES from fully realizing this vision:

1. Lack of centralization: This challenge involves the fragmentation of statistical operations. Specifically, there is a lack of centralization in both data systems and the management of methods, designs, and statistical activities. NCES relies on numerous separate contractors for different projects, creating siloed data systems that make it difficult to efficiently crosswalk or combine different datasets. This calls for a move toward more centralized control over key functions, such as sampling and methodology, to improve timeliness, efficiency and coherence.
2. Lack of R&D resources: The NCES portfolio is currently overloaded with over 60 data collections and 18 programs. This immense workload, coupled with existing budget and staffing constraints, consumes nearly all available resources. Consequently, there are insufficient resources dedicated to research and development (R&D) necessary to modernize methods, integrate emerging data technologies, and future-proof the agency's statistical capabilities.
3. Prohibition on student-level data: A major structural impediment is the perceived or actual prohibition on NCES holding even de-identified student-level administrative data from states. This inability to access existing, rich data sources forces the agency to rely heavily on expensive, time-consuming surveys that are often plagued by continually crashing response rates. Gaining access to such administrative data is seen as key to improving efficiency, timeliness, and accuracy.
4. Portfolio not aligned with budget and staffing: The current NCES portfolio is not aligned with its available budget and staffing levels. The agency is attempting to manage an inherited, overly large set of mandates without the necessary resources. The former commissioners emphasized that Congress must first define the essential, core federal portfolio, and then secure the appropriate funding and personnel to execute that focused mission successfully, rather than stretching limited resources across too many programs.
5. Number of bureaucratic layers: Data releases and operational decisions are slowed by an excessive number of bureaucratic layers having to do with contracting, product reviews, IT, HR, and website. For example, reports and statistical products often undergo multiple and sequential reviews that go far beyond that of other statistical agencies. Besides delaying the releases, it sometimes resulted in tables being released without text that could have provided valuable context and aided usability and other such shortcuts to avoid the lengthy and resource intensive IES review process.

Section 3: Thematic Areas of General Agreement

In the discussion that followed the Commissioners' presentation, several themes seemed to emerge for which there was general agreement. We first summarize global themes and then discuss the many supporting themes.

3A: Global Themes

Federal role for education statistics is essential

Participants seemed to universally agree that the historical federal role in education statistics remains essential whether the Department of Education (ED) continues to exist or not and that continuing NCES—or a functional equivalent—is the most sensible way to do so. The most fundamental federal roles cited by the group were establishing standards that enable comparability, providing the infrastructure and expertise to compile and validate data, and serving as a trusted, objective source that doesn't advantage any particular state or policy position.

The group discussed the following challenges with turning education statistics entirely over to states:

- The need for trusted, objective data from a neutral source
- The ongoing need for high level coordination to provide comparable data
- The unevenness of state administrative data and data access capacity
- The need for surveys even in a world with much greater reliance on administrative data
- Limits in what current federal-state partnerships are able to accomplish

For comparability, participants noted wide variation in state definitions, standards, and priorities, making cross-state comparisons very difficult if not impractical without federal management and systematization. One participant emphasized that ensuring common definitions—for concepts like graduation rates, middle school, attendance, and school types—is "inherently federal because states by definition can't do this themselves." The group noted that creating comparable national statistics requires data structure and formatting standards, including details like reference and submission timelines, which is currently accomplished by NCES in its collections from states.

The group also noted that state capacity varies widely, making comparability of state education progress impractical without a federal role. It also limits data accessibility as anecdotally illustrated by one participant noting that some states cannot provide accurate lists of charter schools in their state. When the idea arose of letting states produce their own data with researchers compiling cross-state comparisons independently, it was quickly noted how this wouldn't work, even though one researcher had successfully done so to replicate a prominent NCES data set by going to states individually. "That's fine if [one researcher] was the only person going every year, but if every single researcher did that, [states] would be overrun."

While the role of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) was not the focus of discussion for this roundtable, one participant expressed strong reservations about the IES functions that go beyond those of NCES, that is, data collection and publication of statistics, saying IES's proper role was the same as that of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (i.e., collecting foundational data for others to analyze).

Status quo is inadequate

The group agreed that the status quo is inadequate and changes are needed. Suggested solutions ranged from addressing bureaucratic, IT, and contracting problems within current legal authorities up to "radical" changes in data sources, methods, and roles that may require statutory changes.

The group's discussion of problems with the status quo focused on the need to

1. Create more timely and actionable data to support policy and other needs
2. Prioritize within NCES's expansive portfolio given resource constraints
3. Better define target audiences to inform data product priorities and investments
4. Create more user-focused products and access to them
5. Better define the right operational scope on a continuum from comprehensive to selective
6. Modernize the data infrastructure
7. Define and support improved partnerships between NCES and states
8. Define a reform approach from incremental to "radical" or a mix of these

Each of these areas is discussed separately in more detail below.

3B: Supporting Themes

1. The need for more timely and actionable data

Timely, and therefore, actionable statistical products are essential for policy relevance and other decisionmaking. Major improvements are needed, and there are a variety of approaches to addressing those, ranging from process efficiencies identified by former NCES leaders to new approaches, to managing quality trade offs such as conducting preliminary or partial data releases and leveraging technological tools

Key Challenges

Former NCES Commissioners described, and participants commented on, multiple process inefficiencies that impede workflow and therefore product timeliness. The most frequently

mentioned was contracts. This issue is central because of NCES's heavy dependence on them to accomplish its work relative to other statistical agencies.

Contracting inefficiencies include the following:

1. The sheer number of contracts, all of which go through layers of review and become bottlenecked within the ED's Contract Acquisition Management (CAM) process, both for approvals and modifications.
2. The dependence on contracts reinforces silos across NCES statistical programs, yielding multiple contracts for similar functions, and inhibiting coordination and efficiencies on outreach and scheduling with states and schools, sampling, and more
3. Inherent review layers, where even routine products are reviewed within the contracting organization, within NCES, and within IES and its peer review process, with inevitable repeating loops when changes are requested or required.

One participant stated the contract issue as follows: we need to "rethink our contracting process. It is what slows things down; it is what causes lack of innovation; it is what causes these extraordinary costs and delays."

Participants also identified barriers to timeliness from survey response challenges, and data completeness and governance requirements (See Modernizing data infrastructure). Specifically, given that "the survey enterprise is crashing" from declining participation and "survey fatigue," it is taking longer to get response levels that address data quality requirements. In some of the core collections, like CCD, participants recalled times when one state's data lagged and therefore the entire release lagged. The group noted that the last small increment can take a long time to get. While a larger issue than NCES, the group also identified as "insane" the "governance over all the data, particularly at the state level, that limits NCES access to data needed to provide complete state coverage.

These systemic issues affect timeliness across all products, which has other ramifications. As one participant noted, the timeliness issue, along with the accessibility issue discussed below, put NCES at a disadvantage with the Congressional appropriation process; specifically a "death spiral": if the data becomes old, hard to understand, or are difficult to find, constituencies are less activated to seek appropriations, and, in turn, appropriations staff are less motivated to fund NCES.

Possible Solutions

The group offered perspectives and possible solutions to the barriers to timeliness.

On contracting, one participant noted that contracting is "an ecosystem with lots of inefficiencies" that are not the fault of just one set of actors. The group identified several ways to rethink the contracting process since it is "a major source of the problems."

For example, the way that contracts are handled is a choice by ED, and could be done differently within current law. Federal Student Aid and the National Assessment Governing

Board (NAGB) have their own contracting authority that limits their reliance on the CAM process, and current law provides needed authority for NCES to operate similarly so NCES could have its own dedicated contracting support.

NCES could restructure contracts to consolidate similar functions (e.g., single sampling contract across surveys), and could explore different contracting approaches (e.g, blanket purchase agreements) for flexibility.

On product reviews, NCES could exercise publication authority like Census, BLS and NAGB, rather than going through the additional layer at IES, noting this is “an example of what happens when you bury deep within the bureaucracy." There could also be “NAGB-like oversight for non-NAEP products to enforce deadlines.”

The group noted several times that a solution to survey problems is moving toward the use of administrative data to a greater extent, including student-level data (See Modernizing data infrastructure). The group heard that NCES had been starting to automate rolling reviews for CCD, and noted that further such process improvements could be pursued.

In addition, the question was posed multiple times: Instead of waiting until the data sets are perfect, can we get to the point where we are ok putting out incomplete data for the sake of timeliness? The discussion mentioned modeling the approach after economic statistics programs like BLS that have a “revision culture” that publishes early, schedules revisions, and normalizes revisions as a quality feature. A Commissioner shared a precedent where NCES did a preliminary release without a single state that was super late, after which the state was more timely. However, the rigidity of the contracting as well as the associated additional expense were noted as impediments for this approach. The group recognized that this would require buy-in, including the possibility of using preliminary releases for some uses but probably not for formula funding or accountability.

2. The NCES portfolio requires prioritization

NCES's portfolio needs to be prioritized because there is longstanding misalignment between the expansive set of requirements and needs (e.g., in ESRA) and available resources.

Key Challenges

One former commissioner referred to the longstanding mismatch between scope (e.g., the many “shalls” in ESRA and the 60 data collections, including 10 for NAEP) and staff (100 FTE in early 2025) as the "elephant in the room," indicating that "it's too much for the budget and staff we had."

Group members discussed individual statistical programs that were a priority for them, recognizing that they could be inclined to give low priority to those they do not use, even if they are a high priority for someone else. The group wondered what criteria should be used to structure such a process. The group also considered the problem of fitting priorities into

available resources when ideally it would be done the other way around. The group acknowledged that “portfolio sprawl” comes in large part from operationalizing congressional requirements, e.g., in IPEDS, which are often on a strict implementation timetable, limiting opportunity to reprioritize or integrate new requirements in an optimal way. One participant said that it is "hard to have these conversations without costs…[it’s] hard to make educated arguments about what to cut and why." It could be helpful if stakeholders could "agree on data sets that could be retired."

Possible Solutions

The group discussed the need for a systematic, transparent priority setting process. It brainstormed possible criteria, such as usage, cost/benefit analysis, federal policy necessity perhaps as demonstrated by explicit decisions based on the data, statutory mandate, uniqueness, and taxpayer value (recognizing that working people ultimately are paying for it).

Related questions that could help identify reductions included: what does a bare bones NAEP look like? How many international comparisons are essential? Clearer framing of the trade offs, such as how to balance comprehensive vision with resource constraints?

The group thought it would advance prioritization if in the near term NCES could

- Compile a clearer picture of individual statistical program costs
- Compile a clearer picture of benefits, e.g., through robust usage metrics, and
- Create a candidate "retirement list" for public comment based on criteria such as above based on the anticipated available resources.

3. Defining target audiences: wholesale versus retail

NCES's wide orientation of its products and services—-on a spectrum from "wholesale" (e.g., most accessible by data experts and intermediaries) to "retail" (e.g., for use by families) —could significantly affect its priorities and product design.

Key Challenges

The group discussed the wide spectrum of past and potential data users. One way to differentiate such users is based on their data skills and resources, from those with sophisticated data analysis skills looking to invest their own effort into using datasets to high school students and their families who often desire simple statistics in context.

Some characterized the wholesale approach as making data available for intermediaries, from researchers, think tanks and advocacy organizations, to non-profits like GreatSchools whose mission is to make a variety of education data easily accessible to families. This focus subscribes to the view that "end consumers aren't really NCES’s target audience" and asks "is the US government the best actor for retail statistical products?"

Some characterized the retail approach as essential, given the daily use of some products such as college navigator, which is fueled by NCES data, along with the value that comes from more sophisticated data user needs being met. This approach frames students and families as one key audience, with commensurate investment in public-facing tools.

The group discussed the importance of clarifying priority audiences, similar to the need for prioritizing statistical programs, as audience has important implications for where investments are made in expertise, data dissemination and access tools, and more.

Possible Solutions

How to address this issue was not discussed to the extent of other topics but a middle ground seemed imaginable, implied in the discussion of APIs and schemas for intermediaries, plus some public-facing presence.

4. Greater emphasis on user-centered products and accessibility

Products should be designed for clarity, usability, and decision support, for its target users, rather than for ease of clearing layers of review or based on other bureaucratic constraints.

Key Challenges

The group discussed the current ways that data are made accessible, from the NCES website design to individual products. As one participant noted, the data are not easy to find and not all available in one place. Such challenges can reflect the siloing found in the underlying statistical programs and contracts (discussed elsewhere). The group recognizes that the “right” product varies by user and need.

The amount of detail and context (related but separate from the discussion of comprehensive versus selective scope) is one dimension of this challenge, as some data users value breadth while others would prioritize timeliness or other attributes. The breadth also ties directly to the vision for NCES in the future: is it “just the facts” or more? The group recognized that prioritizing solutions necessarily requires defining key users (see separate discussion) since different users need different products and want to access them through different kinds of tools.

Possible Solutions

The group discussed a pragmatic approach that says let’s address within current bureaucratic constraints what is possible to improve; being comprehensive is "simply not possible given resources." The group did not explore a less constrained approach to addressing the problems.

5. Scope: comprehensive versus selective

Especially in the context of legislation reauthorization, but even short of it, NCES's operational scope can be conceptualized from comprehensive to selective.

A comprehensive scope seeks to offer a complete picture of the education landscape. It can provide "just the facts" about the condition and progress of education or it can provide greater depth and breadth of content within that comprehensive scope (see Greater emphasis on user centered products). A selective scope acknowledges that some parts of the condition and progress of education are not measured, which might require statutory changes given the long list of areas NCES is supposed to inform.

Key challenges

One challenge the group faced was disentangling issues of scope, breadth, users, and possibly more. These are interrelated issues and different communities describe or think about them differently. There is concern that the “most” scope, breadth, and user base is also the “most” expensive and therefore not sustainable. The group did not have time to fully untangle those topics within the confines of the meeting.

Decisions about scope, from comprehensive to selective, is central to the future NCES vision, and therefore is important to inform.

Possible Solutions

Some of the ideas the group discussed as relevant to informing overall NCES portfolio priorities, priority users, and user centered products may be helpful to advancing this topic as well.

6. Modernizing data infrastructure

Accessibility, usability, timeliness and the many other attributes desired for NCES products all require improved data infrastructure. Moreover, addressing survey response challenges also require capacity to innovate and address data access and governance issues.

Key Challenges

The group acknowledged the world-wide phenomenon of declining survey response rates and increasing survey costs. One participant asked "Are there ways to get away from surveys? The survey enterprise is crashing," Another noted “survey fatigue" now that people “get surveys for every transaction.” Despite shortcomings, participants recognize the ongoing value of surveys. Participants discussed the goals of reducing reliance on them and making them more efficient, not eliminating them entirely. The sentiment is that we need to move much more towards administrative data. The group discussed two main problems with moving in this direction.

First, NCES's data quality standards and data user expectations keep NCES from major changes without research, testing, and engagement. The former Commissioners explained that with the mismatch between requirements and resources (staffing and budget), and silos (data collections, systems and contracts) (see above), it is hard to pursue cross-cutting innovation. There has been no dedicated staff, budget or bandwidth to pursue methodological or other research and development (R&D). Participants agreed that "NCES needs time to look into improvements." These include things like use of web scraping and artificial intelligence (AI). In fact, one participant expressed the vision that "a renewed NCES has purposive R&D."

Second, the group discussed the vast efficiency and timeliness opportunities associated with greater use of administrative data, especially from states, to reduce reliance on surveys. For example, "a lot of NPSAS wouldn't have been needed if we had a national database of post-secondary students NCES can access." One person thought it possible that "the High School Longitudinal Study could be scaled down to a third of budget" with administrative data integration.

They discussed the "case" for use of state data in particular, including that it would

- Eliminate aggregate computation errors (57 entities doing separate calculations)
- Provide faster data availability
- Reduce state burden significantly
- Enable richer analysis
- Reduce survey burden (much of NPSAS or HSLS could be eliminated)

In addition, they noted that the "US government paid a lot for state data" through grants for state longitudinal data systems" and "even de-identified data would have made things so much faster and more efficient."

Some challenges associated with administrative data use include variable capacity across states, governance and data silos within states, and lack of systems interoperability (see next section). Another major challenge is restrictions in current law and legal interpretation, which have prohibited NCES from acquiring or using student-level data, including those held by states, including even "de-identified" data.

Possible Solutions

Despite the push toward administrative data, participants noted the value of NCES-originated sample surveys, and therefore sees value in ensuring that there are "ways to make them more efficient." Among the R&D related questions that the group identified as benefitting from more discussion are

- What percentage of a budget should go to R&D?
- Which bets to make first?
- What is the tolerance for pilot failures?
- How to approach MOUs and funding for critical partners?

Access to student-level data was mentioned many times throughout the roundtable, as a way to speed up product releases, produce more actionable and insightful data, and reduce burden on states. Acknowledging the legal protections around student level data, one participant expressed the sentiment that they “hope the group is open to discussing" changes to statutory restrictions. They acknowledged that a safeguarding structure would be important, including options like strong legal and technical protections, maximizing the use of de-identification techniques, and a robust governance structure.

Among the student data access questions the group identified as benefitting from more discussion are

- What statutory changes are needed? (Currently "legal interpretations prevent" access)
- What technical/governance/legal conditions make this acceptable?
- What outcomes would justify the risk?
- Is this politically viable?

7. Partnering with states

In addition to being consumers of NCES statistics, states are major respondents to NCES surveys, often providing aggregate counts from their own more detailed administrative data. They also are conduits to school districts and others from whom NCES collects data within states. In addition, aided by NCES's grant administration, state data capacity has grown in recent years, and state data is certainly an important part of the future of education statistics. Determining the feasible and optimal role of states and state data in producing national statistics is essential. As one participant stated, I would lean in on thinking through what the role of the states would be in a strengthened NCES going forward, particularly if there's a federated model that brings in more administrative records and linkages, as we're starting to see in other spaces as well.

Major Challenges

The group identified limits to the efficiency and effectiveness of current federal-state partnerships, reflecting NCES resource constraints and programmatic silos (see discussions under Timeliness and Modernizing data infrastructure). One former commissioner added that NCES has "multiple tentacles in states” that “are all siloed." These include NAEP coordinators, the National Forum on Education Statistics participants, CCD fiscal coordinations, and statewide longitudinal grant administrators.

Participants identified states creating statistics to meet their own and others’ needs, and using a bottom up approach to creating regional or even national statistics, thereby reducing the need for a federal statistical role, as one of the more “radical” reform ideas for national education statistics. (See federal role for education statistics is essential for a discussion of major challenges with this approach. Also, see Modernizing data infrastructure for the group’s discussion of the value of increased access to state record level data as a major efficiency for NCES statistical programs.)

Possible Solutions

The group identified opportunities to improve state capacity and federal-state coordination, including exploring

- A more holistic and effective interface between states and NCES, improving upon the current program-specific coordinators model.
- Shared validation services for states to use pre-submission
- Incentives for timely, quality state submissions to NCES

The group also discussed the need for continued partnerships to move toward common data standards, noting that the Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) program, a voluntary partnership between NCES and the states, has been an important contributor to national comparability over time. One participant noted that facilitating CEDS “has been an important historical role” for NCES. Examples of successful outcomes from that program are common definitions of fundamental concepts like graduation rate and what is a middle school.

The group also acknowledged that there is value in non-governmental voluntary standards programs in advancing comparability such as with “credentialing engines” that have been adopted by around 30 states. One participant noted that the field has been "moving in the right direction even though imposing standards from the US government hasn't been possible." Another noted that “federal funding can drive adoption.” One cautioned that we "keep in mind that there are winners and losers" in standardization efforts.

Among the questions the group identified as benefitting from more discussion are

- What incentive structure works?
- Should "publish without laggards" be a standing policy?
- How much federal standardization vs. voluntary adoption is optimal?
- Can OMB (via data standards) play a role?

8. Reform approach: incremental versus radical

NCES reform proposals range from incremental and feasible within existing law and context up to "radical" changes. The differences are in part differing visions of what needs to change, and in part how to “get there.”

Key Challenges

The group recognized that its conversation is happening in the context of a larger set of NCES and IES reform proposals being developed and espoused, even by members of the group. They can be characterized as incremental–such as changes within current law and seen as feasible in the current policy climate, or as more “radical,” such as moving functions from the federal government to states or other actors and requiring statutory changes.

Possible Solutions

Some of the group's discussion was in the "incremental" space such as fixing bureaucratic processes around contracting and review cycles. Others are more "radical" such as changing laws around access to state data.

One participant said that we "need much more radical thinking" about how to solve problems, asking "what's on the table to rethink?" They noted that "governance over all the data is insane - it's in the law but it could be changed." Another said that if we disagreed with some of the more radical proposals, we needed to show how more incremental changes could accomplish the same goals as well or better.

One participant advocated a framework of "faster, cheaper, better" as a practical and understandable rubric. One suggested that because the current structure cannot continue, we need both incremental and potentially radical changes. One person suggested that we focus on the "most urgent without legislation or new resources" as near-term wins," without necessarily abandoning more radical ideas. This topic may benefit from additional discussion.

Section 4: Next steps

Potok concluded the roundtable asking for suggestions for the ASA group leading its NCES revitalization project. One participant noted that the discussion focused more on problems that NCES encountered and less on fixing them. They also acknowledged how difficult fixing the issues are because of their complexity, even while acknowledging that NCES has a 5 year plan that was planned to address some of the challenges discussed. While outside the scope of the ASA project, many participants expressed a desire to discuss and prioritize which NCES data collections and products should be continued. Another suggested a near-term focus on solutions that are most urgent and don't require additional funding or statutory change. Further discussion on the possible solutions summarized in Section 3B—to identify and clarify where there is agreement—are also taken implicitly as next steps. In response to a follow up email from the ASA group–querying in part interest in further discussions—one participant suggested a focused discussion on foundational principles for what NCES should look like moving forward and further input on "what comes next" to address the issues raised during the meeting.