Making federal grants data user-friendly for local leaders (White House Office of Management & Budget, U.S. Department of the Treasury)

Challenge: Create digital tools for Federal financial assistance that help local leaders navigate and manage Federal grants.

OMB/Treasury Policy Priority:
Maximize the return on investment of Federal grant dollars, build on the results of the recent pilot required under Section 5 of the Digital Accountability and Transparency Act of 2014 (DATA Act) by providing digital tools and data in an accessible format to reduce administrative burden, and build public trust by appropriately publishing data that links spending to performance.

What is the problem?
State, local, and tribal governments, nonprofits, and universities complain that, despite the plethora of public data available, it can be dif cult to navigate information about federal programs, funding opportunities, and current awards to nd the best available resources to address their most pressing challenges. This is especially true for lower capacity entities who may not have as much experience partnering with the Federal government. Further, to manage and report on these awards, these organizations must interface with multiple Federal reporting requirements and systems, creating expensive administrative burden. The results of the DATA Act section 5 pilot indicate that burden is reduced when recipients are required to interact with fewer systems to partner with the Federal government, and when identical data can be entered once and reused as necessary.

Why is this problem important?
The Federal government spends more than $700 billion annually on Federal financial assistance, equivalent to 20% of the Federal budget and 5% of the United States gross domestic product. There are more than 40,000 organizations across the country that rely on Federal financial assistance, which often accounts for 20-30% of a state or local government's revenue. Federal grants support everything from local re ghters, police of cers, elementary schools, buses, bridges, housing, school lunches, community health centers, research to cure cancer or invent technology, and even the pipes we use to drink water or ush toilets. Unfortunately, while there are multiple Federal data sets and websites about these resources available to the public, not all local leaders are able to nd and access the resources that could most bene t their communities. Further, these resources are managed in a siloed way, authorized ad hoc over time by Congress, and administered by separate departments within agencies, with separate goals and requirements. For a single local government managing multiple awards, the required reporting processes add up. This fragmentation results in missed opportunities for alignment among complimentary Federal programs. Our taxpayer dollars could go much further faster if those who use them could access and manage them more seamlessly.

Our Vision: Leaders across America maximize return on Federal investments by navigating quickly to the resources best positioned to help them solve their toughest challenges, and access tools to ef ciently manage this partnership.

Engaging communities in the Census (Census Bureau)

Challenge: Create digital tools that enable individuals and communities to see and experience the value of the Census in order to increase participation in the Census.

Census policy priority:
Every decade, in years ending in "0," the U.S. Census Bureau conducts its Decennial Census, apportioning representation in the U.S. House of Representatives, as well as federal funds for critical infrastructure and services such as housing, highways, schools, hospitals, and scores of programs that are vital to the health and welfare of the U.S. population and economy.In addition to the Decennial Census, the U.S. Census Bureau conducts other critical surveys such as the Economic Census and the American Community Survey, which can help businesses do their planning, and measure the health of our economy and places.

It is critical that all those living in the U.S. participate in the Census. It is therefore vital that people know the impact that Census has on their lives, families, communities, and societies. Yet certain groups have been undercounted at disproportionately high rates, including rural communities, children, and those experiencing homelessness. We are bringing together teams of partners from across industries and sectors to ideate new technology platforms and solutions that will drive participation nationwide.

Why is this problem important? When people and businesses participate in the Census, they further drive its value by ensuring a complete count. Having an accurate count then ensures the fair distribution of federal spending and apportionment of congressional seats. When segments of the population are undercounted, it results in fewer resources allocated, imprecise policy recommendations, and less congressional representation for those communities. The 2020 Census will also be the first to have an online response option, presenting new challenges with those who aren't digitally connected, but also opening up new opportunities for creative solutions.

Our vision: people living in America know the impact of the Census on their lives, family, community and society, and are therefore are driven to participate. Learning how to take the Census will be as easy as going to vote.gov.

What is the problem?
Our goal is to conduct a complete and accurate census, but there are challenges ahead. Historically, certain groups have been undercounted at disproportionately high rates, including:
  ● Young, mobile people
  ● Rural communities
  ● Children
  ● People experiencing homelessness

With recent budget cuts, increasing mistrust of the US Government, the digital divide, privacy concerns, and a variety of other attitudes, behaviors, and circumstances we expect this problem to grow. Additional resources on this problem:
  ● [Census Barriers, Attitudes and Motivators Survey](#) (please note pages 48-55)
  ● [Census Planning Database and Low Response Score](#)

Youth Homelessness (Department of Education)

Problem: Homelessness affects a growing number of students nationwide.

The number of homeless students nationwide has nearly doubled from about 680 thousand homeless children and youths enrolled in public schools in 2006-07, to more than 1.3 million during the 2013-14 school year. Over the same period, the number of unaccompanied homeless youths (not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) has more than doubled to nearly 100,000 students. Young children constitute a substantial proportion of children experiencing sheltered homelessness in families (about 250,000 in total) – in FY 2015, about half of all such children were under age 6.

Homelessness can significantly affect students' success in school: homeless students are much less likely to graduate. Homeless students experience greater mobility between schools as well as chronic absenteeism, which can interrupt their education and are associated with lower school achievement and a higher risk of dropping out. Leaders at all levels can benefit from better understanding this challenge and how we serve such students.

Use Case: National, state, and local policymakers, educators, and service agencies could benefit from better understanding where our homeless preK-12 students are enrolled and how well we are serving them.

Areas of need for digital resources include:
- Supporting communities addressing youth homelessness as they consider educational needs. For example, the HUD Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program is providing $33 million in funding to 10 communities committed to ending youth homelessness. The Program requires communities to commit to collaborate with a broad array of partners, develop a coordinated community plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, and participate in a program evaluation.
    - This tool could help communities perform needs assessments and plan for success with an emphasis on education. For example, the tool could focus on specific educational needs, including data such as age and grade breakdown and unaccompanied status.
- Mapping data related to homeless student enrollment, contributing factors, and federally-funded programs/resources. Geographic representation of where homeless students are enrolled by school district; for instance, to understand where services might be most needed.
    - The tool could also include national data on fair market rents (which illustrate housing costs for geographic areas), as well as local data regarding evictions and foreclosure rates to understand potential factors contributing to student homelessness.
    - The tool could also include location and program type data for federally-funded programs and resources that serve vulnerable students. For example, the tool might include publicly available grant award data for HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) funded programs, HHS Runaway and Homeless Youth funded programs, and DOL funded programs such as YouthBuild and Job Corps. Capturing publicly available contact information for local CoC planning bodies, which are required by HUD to address homelessness within their geography, and local school districts—relationships

between education liaisons and CoCs vary significantly in strength across communities– could help these stakeholders build relationships and common understanding.

- Comparing relationships between funding and need. The tool could help local leaders to understand how funding for homeless-related programs compares geographically and by number/percent of homeless students served.
- Comparing outcomes. Help users better understand the relationship between outcomes and homelessness at varying levels. Service providers, for instance, could learn examples of best practices.
    - Comparing the academic outcomes of homeless students to those of their non-homeless peers, potentially identifying schools with best practices for serving homeless students.
    - Comparing characteristics and outcomes of schools/LEAs with high homeless populations to those with low homeless populations.

Veterans Homelessness and Employment (Department of Veterans Affairs)

Policy Priority: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is focused on ensuring that we end homelessness for our veterans and support them in the most effective way possible.

Problem:
Veteran homelessness is a multi-faceted problem requiring a diverse set of solutions. Veterans interact with many organizations and service providers to address career transition, health, and other challenges These groups are not always coordinated, and also leave gaps in needed resources. For example:

- Veterans lack support for translating military skills and training to sustained post-military employment to help them more effectively transition and thrive in civilian life.
- Numerous organizations, including VA and Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), interface with veterans and yet lack a unified communication platform, leaving the burden of organizing and coordinating information on the veteran experiencing homelessness.
- Even when a veteran is given resources for temporary housing; barriers to basic, practical needs such as a ride to and from a medical appointment or a job interview prevent veterans from regaining their independence.

In order to optimize the veteran's experience and outcomes, veterans need technology tools that will help them to connect with jobs that are suited to their individual strengths and specific skills, and connect with transportation to critical appointments such as job interviews. These tools would help veterans to feel supported by the VA and VA partners as they are better able to provide access to the critical resources veterans need.