

# Minding the Store: An Internal Audit Program for Demographic Programs at the U.S. Census Bureau

Session 16

June 2, 2016

Richard Levy

Jimmie Scott

U.S. Census Bureau

[richard.a.levy@census.gov](mailto:richard.a.levy@census.gov)

[Jimmie.b.scott@census.gov](mailto:Jimmie.b.scott@census.gov)

# Overview

- Background
- Audit Program
- Standards with highest compliance
- Standards with most frequent noncompliance
- Resources to complete audits
- Takeaways

# Background

- U.S. Census Bureau
  - Leading source of data on the people, economy, and governments of the United States
    - Largest federal statistical agency
  - Collects data through surveys, censuses and administrative records

# Statistical Quality Standards

- Build on U.S. Office and Management and Budget (OMB) Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys
- Address unique aspects of Census Bureau operations and products

# Oversight Entities

- Demographic Quality Audit Program
- Economic Quality Assurance Program
  
- Office of the Inspector General
- Government Accountability Office

# Audit Phases

1. Preparation
2. Self-assessment
3. Independent review
4. Program action plan
5. Follow-up

Audits are conducted in accordance with **Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards**

# Audit Checklist

(sample)

Std.	Quality Standard Requirement	Division	Compliant (Y/N/NA)		Program Area Supporting Documentation
			Self	Audit	
A1	Planning a Data Program				Note: Evidence for many A1 items is often found in the OMB Supporting Statement.
A1-2 #1a	Program goals				Program Area: Auditor Finding:
A1-2 #1b	Stakeholder requirements and expectations				Program Area: Auditor Finding:

# Evaluation of Audit Program

- Data from years 2011 – 2015 of the audit program (32 quality audits)
- Data compiled:
  - Number and type of findings
  - Hours to complete audit phases



# High-Level Observations

- Average compliance rate: 94%
- Noncompliant findings cluster around activities in the later stages of information product development

# Standards Without Any Noncompliant Findings

- Developing a sample design
- Establishing data collection methods
- Acquiring administrative records
- Capturing data
- Linking data records
- Producing direct estimates from models
- Addressing complaints from data users

# Most Commonly Noncompliant Standards

- Managing Data and Documents
- Producing Measures and Indicators of Nonsampling Error
- Reviewing Information Products / Documenting Review
- Releasing Information Products

# Types of Data Programs

(author's classification)

Data Program	Description
Estimation Program	Takes data from surveys, censuses and administrative records to produce estimates
Process / Participant	Provides background research on data operations, or the program plays a consultative role to a product being developed elsewhere in the agency
Surveys	Full data collection operation: Questionnaire developed, sample selected, instrument fielded, etc.
Value-Added	Takes survey or other data and produces tables and reports

# Noncompliant Findings

Programs averaged **five** noncompliant items per audit

Type of Program	Average Number of Noncompliant Items	Average Rate of Noncompliance
Estimation Programs	1	2%
Process / Participant	1	2%
Surveys	13	10%
Value Added	2	4%

# Time to Conduct Audits

Type of Program	Average Hours Self-Assessment	Average Hours Independent Review
Estimation Programs	87 (excluding outlier)	99
Process / Participant	157	87
Surveys	210	153
Value-Added	90	75

- Self-assessments: 147 hours on average to complete per audit (excluding outlier)
- Independent Review: 110 hours on average to complete per audit

# Takeaways

- Noncompliant findings cluster around activities in the later stages of information product development
- Data programs have the skills to bring their program areas into compliance
- More education about standards is needed

# Resources

- Statistical Quality Standards:  
<https://www.census.gov/about/policies/quality/standards.html>
- Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS):  
<http://gao.gov/yellowbook/overview>



# Questions?