

Session 6

Future of the Funding Opportunities in Survey Research

The Immediate Future of the Funding Opportunity in Survey and Statistical Methodology
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Introduction

There are two distinct periods in the future of the Funding Opportunity in Survey and Statistical Methodology. My remarks deal with the immediate future - the period of time remaining in the existing arrangement between the National Science Foundation (NSF) and 12 Federal agencies of the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy (ICSP) to jointly support the Funding Opportunity. Also, I'll briefly discuss benefits of the Funding Opportunity already realized and others yet to be realized. Nancy Kirkendall will discuss some of the options for continuing the Funding Opportunity after expiration of the existing NSF/ ICSP arrangement.

The Immediate Future Of the Funding Opportunity

Table 1 is essentially a roadmap of the Funding Opportunity during the entire period covered by the NSF/ICSP funding arrangement. The table heading shows three funding years, namely, 1999, 2001, and 2002, and the table stub lists four milestones in each funding year cycle:

- 1) NSF Funding Opportunity announcement issued;
- 2) Two-tiered project review and selection process conducted by NSF and Federal agency panels;
- 3) Seminars, such as this one, convened to review and discuss findings of funded research projects;
- 4) Funded projects are closed out.

The 12 cells in Table 1 are labeled by the calendar years in which the milestones occur. The length of a single funding year cycle, from issuance of the NSF announcement to close-out of funded projects, is about 5 years. The combined length of the three funded years cycles, from issuance of the NSF announcement in the first funding year to close-out of projects in the third funding year, spans an 8-year period, 1998- 2005. The Funding Opportunity is now about

midway into this 8-year period. Milestones represented by the six cells above the jagged line have occurred or are in process of occurring. Milestones represented by the six cells below the jagged line is the roadmap of immediate future of the Funding Opportunity. If we stay on course, research projects being funded this year and those funded next year, respectively, will be presented at seminars, like this one, in years 2003 and 2005. These seminars will provide opportunities for direct discourse between the principal investigators of funded research projects and the statistical staff of Federal agencies.

The outlook for the immediate future of the Funding Opportunity is quite bright. NSF and Federal agency funding is confirmed for the current funding year, 2001, and seems most likely to be forthcoming next year, 2002, the last funding year of the current NSF/ICSP arrangement.

Benefits of the Funding Opportunity

Establishing, developing and successfully testing the mechanism that runs the Funding Opportunity is, I believe, the outstanding achievement so far. The mechanism has two unusual features:

- a) a consortium of 12 Federal agencies in the ICSP and the NSF collaborates in supporting the Funding Opportunity; and
- b) the FCSM serves as the liaison between the ICSP and the NSF in administering the Funding Opportunity.

The first listed feature is unusual because the agencies in the consortium are pooling their resources in order to collectively sustain a basic survey and statistical research program that benefits the entire Federal statistical system. This kind of interagency coordination and collaboration is particularly remarkable because it is occurring in a decentralized Federal statistical system in which short-term demands of individual agencies are the norm.

The second listed feature is unusual because, for the first time, the FCSM is actively engaged in fostering and coordinating an interagency collaborative research program.. This new FCSM activity represents an exciting extension of FCSM's normal activities involving preparation and

distribution of statistical policy working papers and sponsorship of research and statistical policy seminars.

It is fair to say that the Funding Opportunity would never have happened except for the efforts of two individuals. Cheryl Eavey, Chief of NSF Methodology, Measurement, and Statistics Program got the ball rolling with her offer to the ICSP to underwrite half of the funding for the Funding Opportunity during a three year period if Federal agencies agreed to provide matching funds. Katherine Wallman, Chief Statistician, Chair of the ICSP, and head of the OMB Office of Statistical Policy that sponsors the FCSM, got the job done by lending her strong support and astute leadership to the cause.

Concluding comments

Ultimately, the success the Funding Opportunity will be judged by the impact that the research it supports will have on the programs of Federal statistical agencies. Though far too early to make that judgement, the quality of the papers and discussions presented at this Seminar are encouraging signs.

TABLE 1

ROADMAP OF THE FUNDING OPPORTUNITY IN SURVEY AND STATISTICAL METHDOLOGY

MILESTONES	FUNDING YEAR		
	1999	2001	2002
NSF announcement (closing date)	1998	2000	2000
Project review & selection	1999	2001	2002
Seminar presentation	2001	2003	2005
Project close-out	2002	2004	2005

Future of the Funding Opportunity In Survey Research

Nancy J. Kirkendall, Energy Information Administration

To talk about the future, let me set the background with a little detail about our current operations. In 1998, the heads of the 13 largest statistical agencies, members of the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy (ICSP) agreed to participate in this jointly funded research program for 3 years. In essence, the financial agreement was that each agency would provide \$25K (budgets permitting) toward the funding opportunity, and the National Science Foundation (NSF) matched the aggregate contribution providing a total of about \$600K. However, in addition agencies can, and do, decide to contribute to the support of individual proposals that are of particular interest to them. In the first year, only the Census Bureau contributed extra funding for specific projects. In the second year, three agencies contributed extra funding. This is significant, because it increases the pool of money available to fund proposals, thereby encouraging researchers to apply.

The \$25K contribution essentially buys agency participation in the government panel. This funding opportunity uses two panels of experts. The first is the usual peer review panel of experts selected by NSF. This panel reviews the proposals to determine whether they have scientific merit. Those that are judged to have scientific merit are further classified as to whether they are high, medium, or low importance. The government panel of experts reviews the proposals that have scientific merit, as judged by the NSF panel. The government panel is particularly focused on deciding which proposals have the greatest potential to provide results useful to Federal statistical agencies. These are also classified as to whether they have high, medium, or low potential for providing useful results. The opinions of both panels are used to determine the winning proposals. NSF makes the final determination, in consultation with representatives of the Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology (FCSM), another partner in this research opportunity.

Bad News and Good News.

NSF has decided that in the future we will not have a separate proposal for Research in Survey and Statistical Methodology, at least in part because of the time and effort to manage a separate program. However, NSF has agreed that the statistical agencies can participate in the regular Methodology, Measurement and Statistics program, and we can add a summary statement of our needs to the description of that funding opportunity. On the positive side, this gives proposals of interest to the statistical agencies access to a larger amount of NSF money (if they are judged to have high importance by the scientific panel.) Agencies will still be able to contribute funds, both as a consortium and to support research of interest to them. The government panel can continue to operate in the same way and review the proposals that NSF's expert panel judges to have scientific merit.

The new approach may have an added advantage of providing Statistical Agencies more control over how their money is spent. The question we need to answer for the future is how best to coordinate the activities of the statistical agencies. Here are some options.

Option 1a: Agencies each pay X dollars to "buy a seat" at the table of government experts. X will be fairly small, because some of the agencies are small. In addition, agencies will be encouraged to

authorize their expert to identify particular proposals of special interest to them (if any) and to contribute additional funding to those proposals.

Pro: This helps to assure that the government experts review proposals from a Federal statistical system point of view.

The government panel could actually make the decision as to which proposals to fund for the benefit of the statistical system. (In the current model, the government panel advice is advisory.)

Agencies can also decide to contribute to projects of special interest.

Con: Even though X is small, smaller agencies object to paying for research that they do not think benefits them.

Option 1b: Similar to option 1a except large agencies pay X dollars, and small agencies pay Y dollars (X greater than Y) to “buy a seat” at the table of government experts. (Same pros and cons).

Option 2: Statistical agencies convene a government expert panel, with no requirement for “up-front-funding”. The government experts will be authorized by their agency to identify particular proposals of special interest to them and to contribute additional funding to those proposals.

Pro: Agencies only pay for research that they think benefits them.

Government panel facilitates agency access to research proposals.

Individual agencies can decide to jointly fund specific proposals.

Con: Agencies do not necessarily act for the common good of the statistical system.

These options are the ones I have thought of, and I would be very interested to hear comments on them, as well as any additional ideas anyone may have. I would also be interested in expanding the list of pros and cons for these options. One shortcoming of all options presented above is that none of them addresses the issue of how to make the program more broadly accessible to smaller statistical agencies, those that are not represented on the ICSP.

Our challenge over the next year is to come up with a specific proposal to take to the Interagency Council on Statistical Policy. I think the leaders of the Statistical Agencies generally like the program we have now; or, at least, they like the idea of jointly sponsoring research. The grumbling I have heard is from smaller agencies with limited budgets. Part of the reason for our current common research program is to provide the smaller agencies with access to research by leveraging our common interests. The larger agencies already have mechanisms in place to sponsor research. As a result, they do not feel that they necessarily gain as much from the collaboration. Although, one might say that the government panel provides a convenient way to identify specific proposals that could benefit their programs.

Reports Available in the Statistical Policy Working Paper Series

1. ***Report on Statistics for Allocation of Funds***, 1978 (NTIS PB86-211521/AS)
2. ***Report on Statistical Disclosure and Disclosure-Avoidance Techniques***, 1978 (NTIS PB86-211539/AS)
3. ***An Error Profile: Employment as Measured by the Current Population Survey***, 1978 (NTIS PB86-214269/AS)
4. ***Glossary of Nonsampling Error Terms: An Illustration of a Semantic Problem in Statistics***, 1978 (NTIS PB86-211547/AS)
5. ***Report on Exact and Statistical Matching Techniques***, 1980 (NTIS PB86-215829/AS)
6. ***Report on Statistical Uses of Administrative Records***, 1980 (NTIS PB86-214285/AS)
7. ***An Interagency Review of Time-Series Revision Policies***, 1982 (NTIS PB86-232451/AS)
8. ***Statistical Interagency Agreements***, 1982 (NTIS PB86-230570/AS)
9. ***Contracting for Surveys***, 1983 (NTIS PB83-233148)
10. ***Approaches to Developing Questionnaires***, 1983 (NTIS PB84-105055)
11. ***A Review of Industry Coding Systems***, 1984 (NTIS PB84-135276)
12. ***The Role of Telephone Data Collection in Federal Statistics***, 1984 (NTIS PB85-105971)
13. ***Federal Longitudinal Surveys***, 1986 (NTIS PB86-139730)
14. ***Workshop on Statistical Uses of Microcomputers in Federal Agencies***, 1987 (NTIS PB87-166393)
15. ***Quality in Establishment Surveys***, 1988 (NTIS PB88-232921)
16. ***A Comparative Study of Reporting Units in Selected Employer Data Systems***, 1990 (NTIS PB90-205238)
17. ***Survey Coverage***, 1990 (NTIS PB90-205246)
18. ***Data Editing in Federal Statistical Agencies***, 1990 (NTIS PB90-205253)
19. ***Computer Assisted Survey Information Collection***, 1990 (NTIS PB90-205261)
20. ***Seminar on Quality of Federal Data***, 1991 (NTIS PB91-142414)
21. ***Indirect Estimators in Federal Programs***, 1993 (NTIS PB93-209294)
22. ***Report on Statistical Disclosure Limitation Methodology***, 1994 (NTIS PB94-165305)
23. ***Seminar on New Directions in Statistical Methodology***, 1995 (NTIS PB95-182978)
24. ***Electronic Dissemination of Statistical Data***, 1995 (NTIS PB96-121629)
25. ***Data Editing Workshop and Exposition***, 1996 (NTIS PB97-104624)
26. ***Seminar on Statistical Methodology in the Public Service***, 1997 (NTIS PB97-162580)
27. ***Training for the Future: Addressing Tomorrow's Survey Tasks***, 1998 (NTIS PB99-102576)
28. ***Seminar on Interagency Coordination and Cooperation***, 1999 (NTIS PB99-132029)
29. ***Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology Research Conference (Conference Papers)***, 1999 (NTIS PB99-166795)
30. ***1999 Federal Committee on Statistical Methodology Research Conference: Complete Proceedings***, 2000 (NTIS PB2000-105886)
31. ***Measuring and Reporting Sources of Error in Surveys***, 2001 (NTIS PB2001-104329)
32. ***Seminar on Integrating Federal Statistical Information and Processes***, 2001 (NTIS PB2001-104626)
33. ***Seminar on the Funding Opportunity in Survey Research***, 2001 (NTIS PB2001-108851)

Copies of these working papers may be ordered from NTIS Document Sales, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22161; telephone: 1-800-553-6847. The Statistical Policy Working Paper series is also available electronically from FCSM's web site <<http://www.fcsm.gov>>.