



Evidence: A Year of Progress on Evidence-Based Policymaking SEPTEMBER 2018

About the Evidence-Based Policymaking Initiative

The Bipartisan Policy Center in 2017 launched the Evidence-Based Policymaking Initiative to advance a stronger foundation of evidence in policymaking. BPC's Initiative supports implementation of the unanimous recommendations from the U.S. Commission on Evidence-Based Policymaking to improve the way government uses data to create the evidence used for informing effective public policies. BPC's Initiative has **elevated a message** that better use of evidence in policymaking is both necessary and possible, and **successfully advanced reforms** that will implement the commission's recommendations.

With the generous support of the William T. Grant Foundation, the Laura and John Arnold Foundation, and Schmidt Futures, BPC is continuing to work toward a future with more robust evidence-based policymaking.

Explaining the Value of Data and Evidence

Policymakers are increasingly interested in the promise of using data and evidence to make better decisions, but many barriers exist to fostering a stronger evidence culture in government. BPC provides educational resources about why evidence is critical for effective and efficient governing the past year, BPC's Initiative produced:

-  **11 BPC-sponsored public events** highlighting the importance of evidence in policymaking
-  **5 technical papers** that offer strategies for improving government's production and use of evidence
-  **26 issue briefs, articles, and podcasts** about how to effectively use data in making policy
-  **6 collaborations** with international organizations and delegations offering U.S. expertise on data infrastructure and evaluation issues

Leading the Charge for the Promise of Evidence

BPC promoted a robust dialogue in the policy and professional communities which built momentum for advancing the commission's recommendations. By bringing attention to reforms that improve data access and privacy protections, BPC aims to strengthen the capacity for evidence-based policymaking.

-  **100+ educational events** across the country discussing the commission's findings and recommendations
-  **5 commissioners testified** to Congress about why the recommendations are necessary
-  **148 endorsements** of the commission's strategy, representing over 400,000 individuals in professional societies, nonprofits, and privacy organizations, including 36 former heads of U.S. statistical agencies
-  **5 op-eds published** calling for actions that encourage the use of data in government

Supporting Action on the Commission's Vision

Congress and the executive branch are beginning to take action to develop proposals that would implement commission recommendations. BPC and former commissioners provided analysis to inform executive actions and congressional deliberations on key provisions of legislation.



39 briefings for congressional and executive branch staff about why the commission's recommendations matter for improving the state of evidence-based policymaking in the U.S.



5 comments on administrative proposals offering suggestions for how executive branch agencies can better use their data in a privacy-protective manner



7 bills with technical assistance about strategies for using evidence, accessing or sharing data, and deploying strong confidentiality protections

Making Progress on the Commission's Recommendations

FOUNDATIONS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICYMAKING ACT

The Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act was introduced in the House and Senate in 2017 with provisions to improve the ability of researchers, evaluators, and statisticians to securely use data the government already collects to better inform important policy decisions. The bill jointly filed by House Speaker Paul Ryan (R-WI) and Sen. Patty Murray (D-WA) **includes 10 of the commission's recommendations**. It would:

- Encourage government agencies to establish evaluation officers and learning agendas to bolster capacity
- Take steps to improve public trust in statistics and enhance risk assessment for government's use of data
- Enable improved data sharing and use with strict privacy safeguards and greater transparency

The bill unanimously passed the House and is pending further action in the Senate.

DATA AS A STRATEGIC ASSET IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH MANAGEMENT AGENDA

A March 2018 federal management proposal announced the administration's intent to develop a new government-wide data strategy. The announcement recognized that government needs to modernize its data infrastructure for an increasingly data-driven

world. The strategy will prioritize how data are managed, access to data, uses of data, and the commercialization of government-collected data. The key components of the data strategy closely align with the commission's recommendations, including privacy-protective approaches to accessing and using data.

REFORM PROPOSAL FOR FEDERAL PROGRAM EVALUATION AND DATA ANALYSIS ACTIVITIES

A series of government reform proposals announced for the federal executive branch in 2018 included plans to strengthen government's ability to conduct program evaluation. The proposals acknowledge that without formal evaluation of policies and programs, policymakers lack information about what works and what does not. In endorsing the commission's recommendations, the administration noted that testing innovative strategies and executing effective programs requires evaluation, in addition to core data analytics and statistics.

TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT FOR SECURE, PRIVATE, AND CONFIDENTIAL DATA ANALYTICS

BPC in 2018, with support from Schmidt Futures, launched an innovative demonstration project to test the application of an approach for privacy-preserving data analysis which the commission had recommended be explored. BPC's demonstration will use multi-party computation to securely link and analyze county-level human services data for research while maintaining data confidentiality. In addition to BPC's project, two bills have been introduced in Congress that could advance the approach in targeted policy areas.

About the Bipartisan Policy Center

Founded in 2007 by former Senate Majority Leaders Howard Baker, Tom Daschle, Bob Dole, and George Mitchell, the Bipartisan Policy Center is a nonprofit organization that drives principled solutions through rigorous analysis, painstaking negotiation, and aggressive advocacy. While finding solutions is never easy, BPC believes the American answer will always rest in harnessing the best ideas from both parties to promote health, security, and opportunity for all.

Evidence-Based Policymaking Initiative

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