



# Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency:: Fourth Edition

*Committee on National Statistics, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council*

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Since 1992, the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) has produced a book on principles and practices for a federal statistical agency, updating the document every 4 years to provide a current edition to newly appointed cabinet secretaries at the beginning of each presidential administration.

This fourth edition presents and comments on four basic principles that statistical agencies must embody in order to carry out their mission fully:

- (1) They must produce objective data that are relevant to policy issues,
- (2) they must achieve and maintain credibility among data users,
- (3) they must achieve and maintain trust among data providers, and
- (4) they must achieve and maintain a strong position of independence from the appearance and reality of political control.

The book also discusses 11 important practices that are means for statistical agencies to live up to the four principles. These practices include a commitment to quality and professional practice and an active program of methodological and substantive research. This fourth edition adds the principle that statistical agencies must operate from a strong position of independence and the practice that agencies must have ongoing internal and external evaluations of their programs.

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