



Commerce Data Advisory Council (CDAC)

Council Recommendations Report

Delivered to U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker

October 28, 2016

I. Institutionalize the Data Initiative

We appreciated the briefings on the steps the Department is taking to institutionalize the CDS. The focus on funding and staffing is critical. Yet, beyond CDS, we recommend that you engage policymakers, including Congress and the President, on the importance of the work Commerce is doing to advance its data initiatives more broadly. It is imperative that these initiatives become part of the Commerce fabric and do not end with this Administration. Commerce is leading the federal government's efforts to advance data science, data availability and utility, and data-driven decision making. We encourage you to do whatever you can to ensure the next administration embraces and continues to advance these important endeavors.

II. Evolve the Commerce Data Service (CDS)

Although it has only been a few months since its launch, the Commerce Data Service is beginning to thrive. With its nimble, start-up attitude, CDS is already developing a reputation for meaningful innovation. The constant churning of challenges and ideas associated with these characteristics means that the CDS will always need talent and an organization that can pivot on a dime. We encourage you to engage with the CDAC and the private sector generally to ensure you are continually recruiting and retaining the optimal mix of talent to make the CDS exceptional. As the CDS continues to hire, it needs to also build and strengthen internal capacity for marketing, product management, and growth management. We recommend organizing its priorities around three areas:

1. Continue building data products and services that deliver a clear ROI to internal Commerce users.
2. Investing in high-risk, high-reward data science projects that can capture the imagination of our nation and dramatically improve America's competitiveness.

3. Continue the data academy so that an increasing number of government employees can harness the power of data for the good of their organizations.

III. Lead with Better Customer Metrics

Despite technical difficulties in understanding who uses Commerce data, the Department needs to fundamentally improve the way it measures customer engagement. Industry best-practices show that an organization of Commerce's size and scope should have robust and embedded ways to capture and utilize customer metrics. For example, the Department cannot have a data-driven conversation about the value of its products and services until it can comprehensively measure both downloads and engagements through Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), and understand how entities embed Commerce data in their products and services. Such capabilities are possible through the creation of a centralized "enterprise architecture" and the addition of stronger "metadata" on official Commerce data sets. As another example, the Department should have a visual data dashboard to track its own performance against the five pillars of the "Open for Business" strategic framework.

IV. Explore a "Labs Concept" to Harness Private Sector Capabilities

There is unique and valuable potential to scale out the partnership mechanisms between the Department of Commerce and leaders in the private sector. For example, at our last meeting, we identified that the increased usage of "labs" (and the flexibility they provide for private-sector style software engineering R&D) could bring to Commerce game-changing capabilities from leading tech companies. These capabilities would likely spur the creation of extremely valuable new data products and services. Furthermore, the Commerce Data Service should strongly consider leveraging a "labs concept" through Joint Venture (JV) programs and Creative Research and Development Agreements (CRADAs) in order to experiment with CDS-private industry collaborations. To further illustrate the point, individual CDAC members have already pledged industry experts, best-in-class software tools, and big data computing power if an appropriate, transparent and equitable platform can be set up to plug in such offers.

V. The CDAC Should Continue and Grow

We believe this Council has already proven an effective resource in advancing the Department’s strategic objective of “maximizing the positive impacts of Commerce data on society.” We look forward to continuing our work. Over the past year, we have learned a great deal about the Department and a great deal about how this Advisory Council can best assist you. To that end, we have ideas about refining the Council’s charter, attracting members with particularly relevant skill sets, and organizing the Council for optimal effectiveness. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these ideas with your team and look forward to your continued support.