



Policy Development in the Social and Behavioral Sciences Subcommittee (SBS) of the National Science and Technology Council

September 2022

Background

The Biden-Harris Administration formally rechartered the **Social and Behavioral Sciences Subcommittee (SBS) of the Committee on Science of the National Science and Technology Council** in April 2022. The SBS coordinates policy action to address pressing social issues and Biden-Harris Administration priorities using the tools and insights of the social and behavioral sciences.

The work of the SBS meets the mandates of the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018](#); the January 20, 2021 [Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support of Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#); and the January 27, 2021 [Presidential Memorandum on Restoring Trust in Government Through Scientific Integrity and Evidence-Based Policymaking](#).

The social and behavioral sciences offer unique tools for describing, understanding, and addressing societal challenges, and assessing and evaluating initiatives, programs, and policies. As described in its [Charter](#), the SBS leverages these tools to advance the Biden-Harris Administration's agenda, to carry out short-term, high-priority tasks, and to lay the groundwork for longer-term coordination of agency efforts related to the social and behavioral sciences.

The first short-term task of the SBS is to deliver a whole-of-government framework or "blueprint" for the use of social and behavioral science research to advance evidence-based policymaking by April 30, 2023.

The SBS is co-chaired by the Office of Science and Technology Policy, the National Science Foundation, and the National Institutes of Health, and comprises membership from a diverse range of Agencies, Departments, and Executive Offices. It provides a forum for collaborative, interagency work towards advancing equity through the activation of social and behavioral science evidence.

The SBS engages the expertise, vision, and creativity of the research community both inside and outside of the Federal government in support of these efforts. Please email sbs@ostp.eop.gov with thoughts, questions, comments, or suggestions pertaining to this Policy Development Plan.



Policy Development Plan

The SBS has established interagency working groups (IWGs) around five policy action areas reflecting Administration priorities:

1. Accessibility of Digital Infrastructure and Services;
2. Communicating Hazard Information and Other Types of Uncertainty;
3. Decarbonization and Justice;
4. Good Jobs; and
5. Safely Reducing Criminal Justice System Interactions, Improving Rehabilitation during Incarceration, and Enhancing Re-entry.

To guide the work of each IWG, the SBS also has developed a series of cross-cutting questions, below, that will be applied to and answered in each policy action area. These questions serve as prompts to identify unique contributions of social and behavioral science evidence, and opportunities for strengthening, translating, and using such evidence, within a specific policy action area.

IWGs work collaboratively within the larger SBS Subcommittee. This structure provides opportunities to identify common themes across the initial findings, within and between IWGs, which ultimately will form the basis of the blueprint report.

The IWGs work closely with other Agency and Executive Office initiatives in order to elevate rather than duplicate efforts.

Cross-Cutting Questions

1. What are some of the most important things the social and behavioral sciences already have helped us to learn on the given topic, especially pertaining to social challenges related to the topic?
 - a. What methods have been successfully used to generate SBS knowledge the topic? Please pay particular attention to topics that you feel should be highlighted in our work, e.g., incorporating community input and engagement, relying on experimental methods such as RCTs, employing qualitative methods, etc.
 - b. What data sources have people used? Are any of them Federal data sources? Are any of them readily publicly available?
 - c. Are there existing resources that summarize social and behavioral science research on the given topic in a way that is accessible to policymakers and other USG decision makers?



2. What social and behavioral science research has been, or is being, pursued on this topic within the Federal agencies?
 - a. What agencies lead this work, or may wish to do so in the future?
 - b. What kinds of cross-agency collaborations are present, or might be possible in the future? Some examples include data sharing, joint program development and implementation, one agency using the research findings of another, among others.
3. What, if any, are the *unique* contributions of the social and behavioral sciences for understanding and addressing a given topic, especially with regard to understanding the implications for equity? For example, do they help to provide clearer understandings of the drivers of particular outcomes, enable strong causal estimates, enable us to focus on diversity of experiences, suggest helpful policy levels, or facilitate other unique contributions?
4. What actions in practice or policy do you recommend that your agency take to address key challenges related to the given topic, based on the knowledge developed through social and behavioral research? In other words, what does SBS evidence suggest we *do* to address these challenges through the levers available to us in USG?
 - a. Are any of those actions already underway?
 - b. Do any of these actions involve, or seek to involve, community input and engagement?
 - c. Do any of these actions involve, or seek to involve, other Federal agencies?
 - d. Of the actions you recommend, please organize them from easiest to most difficult to implement (e.g., light lift, medium lift, heavy lift).
5. What are the opportunities when it comes to:
 - a. Taking the actions you recommended in (4)?
 - b. Addressing any barriers to taking the actions you recommend in (4)?
6. What are the opportunities and barriers when it comes to:
 - a. Ensuring that SBS evidence reaches USG decision makers, more broadly?
 - b. Ensuring that SBS evidence is used by USG decision makers, more broadly?

Moving Forward

We look forward to updating the public on our progress and sharing the products of this important effort.