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Role of Business Registers

The Business Register as a Service Provider: Examples from the U.S. Census Bureau

Abstract

The U.S. Census Bureau's Business Register (BR) offers a variety of services that go beyond its traditional role as a repository of statistical units and administrative data. Given its central position within the larger statistical production system, the BR offers a logical platform for deploying solutions that promote standardization, integration, efficiency, and cost savings throughout many aspects of the survey life cycle. The intent of this paper is to discuss some of these solutions and convey the multi-faceted nature of the BR and its importance as a corporate-wide resource in the context of creating high-quality business statistics. Specifically, this paper will explore five key services that are provided by the BR: (1) *Sampling support*— a discussion of supplemental BR outputs that are provided to survey methodologists for frame construction and research, (2) *Operational control system (OCS)*— an illustration of the different roles that the BR plays in facilitating both the collection and processing of the Economic Census, (3) *Geographic coding*—a brief treatment on the input elements, output values, and the degree to which the geocoding system is integrated with the BR, (4) *Company reporting calendar*— a description of the role the BR plays in implementing a tool that provides respondents with a comprehensive list of their survey obligations and reporting burden, and (5) *Workflow*—an overview of an electronic work-delivery system for use by BR analysts in updating company information as derived from survey responses. For each of these services, a purpose and description will be presented along with the benefits that it provides or the problems that it solves. The primary objective of the paper is not necessarily to provide an exhaustive list of services-- or even to totally dissect those that are covered—but, rather, to demonstrate some ways in which the role of a mature business register can be expanded and enhanced within a survey organization.