

U.S. National Reporting Platform for Sustainable Development Goal Indicators: *Overview and Background for Data Providers and Platform Managers*

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Overview:

This document provides instructions and guidance for using the U.S. National Reporting Platform (NRP) to report national statistics for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Indicators. Certification of these entries is also described. This guide also provides a brief background of the SDGs, the purpose of the NRP, guidance for data providers of this platform, and information for platform managers.

Background:

UN Sustainable Development Goal Indicators

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)¹ in September 2015. A core element of this Agenda is the agreement by the U.S. and all UN members to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 associated targets. In March 2016, the UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) endorsed the 230 indicators [proposed](#) by its Interagency and Expert Group on SDGs (IAEG-SDGs) to monitor and review global and country-level progress on the SDGs.² In July 2017, UNGA adopted the indicator framework as an initial starting point for SDG monitoring.³

The Secretariat for the IAEG classified the agreed indicators, based on their level of methodological development and overall availability, into three different tiers:

Tier I – Indicator conceptually clear, established methodology and standards available and data regularly collected by countries.

Tier II – Indicator conceptually clear, established methodology and standards available, but data are not regularly collected by countries.

Tier III – Indicator for which there are no established methodology and standards, or methodology/standards are being developed/tested.

US Reporting for SDG Global Indicators

The U.S. contributed input to the tiering of indicators according to the presence of established, global methodology and scope of collection. It also contributed to the development of the plan for systematic review and revision of indicators, as adopted by UNGA.⁴ The U.S. also identified indicators which it would not report, given policy concerns. The availability of Federal statistics for reporting against these global indicators was examined.

¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>.

² <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/statcom/47th-session/documents/2016-2-IAEG-SDGs-Rev1-E.pdf>

³ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2017/TheSustainableDevelopmentGoalsReport2017.pdf>

⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

A set of global indicators have been identified that meet initial reporting requirements: Tier 1 indicators which present no USG policy concerns for which Federal statistics (or the underlying data) are available. The U.S. began reporting national statistics for global indicators in September 2016, starting with Tier I indicators that are also consistent with USG policy. The U.S. will continue to update these indicators

Purpose of the National Reporting Platform:

Most of the global SDG indicators require national statistics as their basis. In the U.S., the majority of these national statistics are produced by the U.S. Federal Statistical System. The U.S. statistics are not modeled in the absence of recent data by international organizations, and are not the result of data collections sponsored by UN or other development organizations, such as the Demographic Health Surveys. Therefore, in the majority of cases, U.S. statistics would not be appropriately provided through other non-governmental organizations. Rather, several international organizations will require access to US national statistics to adjust values for global comparability.

The U.S. has a highly decentralized statistical system, spanning 127 agencies spread across the USG.⁵ The reporting requirements for global SDG indicators to the U.S. Federal government will be substantial, given their volume, breadth, available metadata, and reporting period (2000-2030).

The SDG indicators have many stakeholders, not only in international organizations, but, also in academia and civil society. Perhaps most centrally, SDG indicators will be of interest to the general public. Reporting these indicators in a way that is accessible and transparent to these varied audiences is essential.

To manage this task efficiently, responsibly, and transparently, data science expertise was applied to develop a scalable, interoperable, and sustainable solution. Accordingly, a national reporting platform (NRP) was built to accommodate contributions from multiple data providers on a flow basis. Secure access and automated tracking of revisions helped ensure that reporting reflected high quality, official Federal statistics. The NRP was built in collaboration with other national statistical offices and interested international organizations⁶ to promote interoperability of functions to support use for international reporting requirements.

⁵ See Statistical Programs of the United States Government [Blue Book] https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/information_and_regulatory_affairs/statistical-programs-2016.pdf. For related information and upcoming FY 2017 Blue Book, see https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/inforeg_statpolicy.

⁶ https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/bur/2016/October/05Add1-TOR_TF_National_Reporting_Platforms_final.pdf

The platform is also accessible to the general public to promote transparency and accountability. Further, the platform uses open source technology and can be shared freely with other countries interested in receiving such technical assistance.⁷

U.S. SDG Data Policy:

Which Data Sources are Eligible?

Given the importance the USG has placed on ensuring the quality of data and statistics on which policy decisions are based, the Office of the U.S. Chief Statistician (located in the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs in the Office of the Management and Budget) has the authority to coordinate the U.S. Federal Statistical System. The US Chief Statistician does this by issuing and enforcing Federal statistical standards and guidance to ensure the relevance, accuracy, objectivity, and confidentiality of Federal statistical products. (See [USG Statistical Policy Directive 1.](#))

In some cases, USG may not currently generate data relevant to reporting on a particular SDG indicator, even though the indicator has been identified as Tier I by the IAEG Secretariat (and therefore, expected to be conceptually clear and routinely collected). In those circumstances, USG will examine opportunities to leverage existing statistical programs to allow the production of official Federal statistics for a given SDG indicator. In some cases, as is our current practice, USG will examine other, non-Federal data sources to assess their quality and transparency and, if found suitable for the intended use, will provide statistics and available metadata.

How are Data Providers Selected?

To assess current availability of Federal data for reporting SDG indicators, the USG convened an Expert Group on SDG Indicators (now known as the Interagency Working Group on SDG Data). This group comprises policy experts who contributed to negotiations of the sustainable development goals, targets, and, with OMB, the specification of indicators. Under the direction of OMB, the group was expanded to include Federal statistical agency experts engaged in the production of Federal statistics relevant to the SDG indicators. These statistical experts also contributed to the specification of SDG indicators.

The Working Group identified Federal data providers for each indicator for which Federal data were available. For statistical indicators, data providers are staff from Federal statistical agencies. For non-statistical indicators, data providers are generally staff from Federal policy agencies. The Working Group also identifies proposed revisions or refinements to the SDG indicator framework. The terms of reference and organization of the IWG SDG Data can be found here.

⁷ See [M-13-13, Open Data Policy - Managing Information as an Asset.](#)