

The conference's agenda was a wide ranging exploration of the information needs for decisionmaking by State and local governments. The conference's principal recommendations were that:

Each State should establish (or designate) a statistical coordination/standardization unit.

There should be a continuing forum for the development of improved statistical data in functional areas where appropriate.

There should be a continuing body to provide the necessary links between the States and the Federal Government to assure the continuing and persistent attention necessary to secure improvements in the comparability of statistical information.

On another front, the National Association of State Budget Officers and the Council of State Governments have been concerned for some time about the interrelationships between increasing requirements for information arising out of Federal grant-in-aid programs, the increasing use of electronic data processing equipment, and the comparability of information designed to serve the needs of program managers and overall executive management. Originally oriented primarily to problems related to data processing, this interest has shifted to the general area of information systems.

We have welcomed both of these efforts. We have added a member of the staff of the Office of Statistical Standards who has the primary responsibility of working on matters relating to Federal-State statistical coordination. This is Mr. Royce Lowry of our staff, formerly associated as executive secretary of the Federal Statistical Users' Conference.

The Bureau of the Budget through OSS has also agreed to provide the secretariat for the continuing body recommended by the National Conference on Comparative Statistics. We hope that another conference on comparative statistics will be held later this year.

An intergovernmental Task Force on Information Systems has been established by the Director of the Bureau of the Budget and by the Council of State Governments to consider the problems and opportunities which arise out of the flow of information between the various levels of government in the federal system. It is chaired by Mr. John Kennedy, Special Assistant on Intergovernmental Relations to the Governor of Illinois. It consists of two representatives from State governments, two from county governments, two from local governments, a representative from the Advisory Council on Intergovernmental Relations, and two members of the staff of the Bureau of the Budget. A member of my staff is one of the Budget Bureau representatives on this task force.

Since the National Conference on Comparative Statistics, some eight States have created or designated a statistical coordination/standardization unit or have such a step under active consideration. There may be similar activity underway in other States about which I am not aware. While it had been hoped that substantially more progress in this direction would have been accomplished by now, the steps that have been taken represent significant gains. I hope that the States which have not yet established statistical coordination/standardization units will soon do so, for efforts to promote the statistical comparability desired by the Governors are seriously hampered when there is no single point of contact within each State charged with overall responsibility for statistical development.