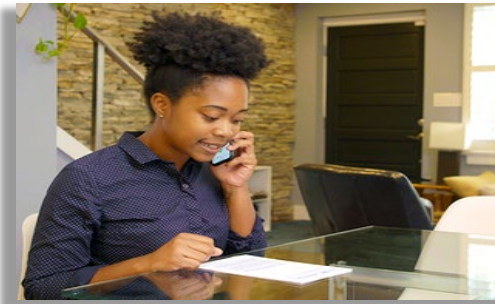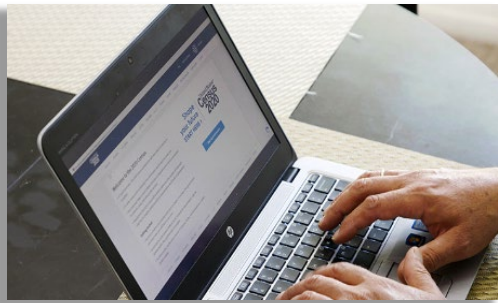# Strategic Plan for Using Administrative Records Data in the American Community Survey

Sandra Clark, U.S. Census Bureau
ACS Data Users Conference
March 17, 2023

Any views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.

ACS Data Collection

2 months of self-response via internet, mail, or TQA

One month of personal interviews

ACS Quick Facts

Addresses	Topics	Programs	Estimates	Funding
3.5 million	40+	300	11 billion	$100s of billions

ACS Annual Data Releases

- 65,000 + population: 1-year Estimates

- 20,000 + population: 1-year Supplemental Estimates

- Census Tracts and Block Groups: 5-year Estimates

ACS Topics

American Community Survey Topics

Social Characteristics

Ancestry
Citizenship Status
Disability Status
Educational Attainment
Fertility
Grandparents as Caregivers
Language Spoken at Home
Marital History
Marital Status
Migration/Residence 1 Year Ago
Period of Military Service
Place of Birth
School Enrollment
Undergraduate Field of Degree
Veteran Status
Year of Entry

Economic Characteristics

Class of Worker
Commuting (Journey to Work)
Employment Status
Food Stamps (SNAP)
Health Insurance Coverage
Income and Earnings
Industry and Occupation
Place of Work
Poverty Status
Work Status Last Year

Demographics Characteristics

Age and Sex
Hispanic or Latino Origin
Race
Relationship to Householder

Housing Characteristics

Computer and Internet Use
House Heating Fuel
Kitchen Facilities
Occupancy/Vacancy Status
Occupants Per Room
Plumbing Facilities
Rent
# of Rooms
# of Bedrooms
Selected Monthly Owner Costs
Telephone Service Available
Tenure (Owner/Renter)
Units in Structure
Value of Home
Vehicles Available
Year Householder Moved Into Unit
Year Structure Built

Administrative Records Data

Administrative records data are data collected from government agencies to administer programs or provide services. These data are distinct from the data collected exclusively for statistical purposes, like those the Census Bureau produces under the authority of Title 13 U.S. Code.

Some examples are data collected from forms for:

- Social Security benefits
- Tax filing
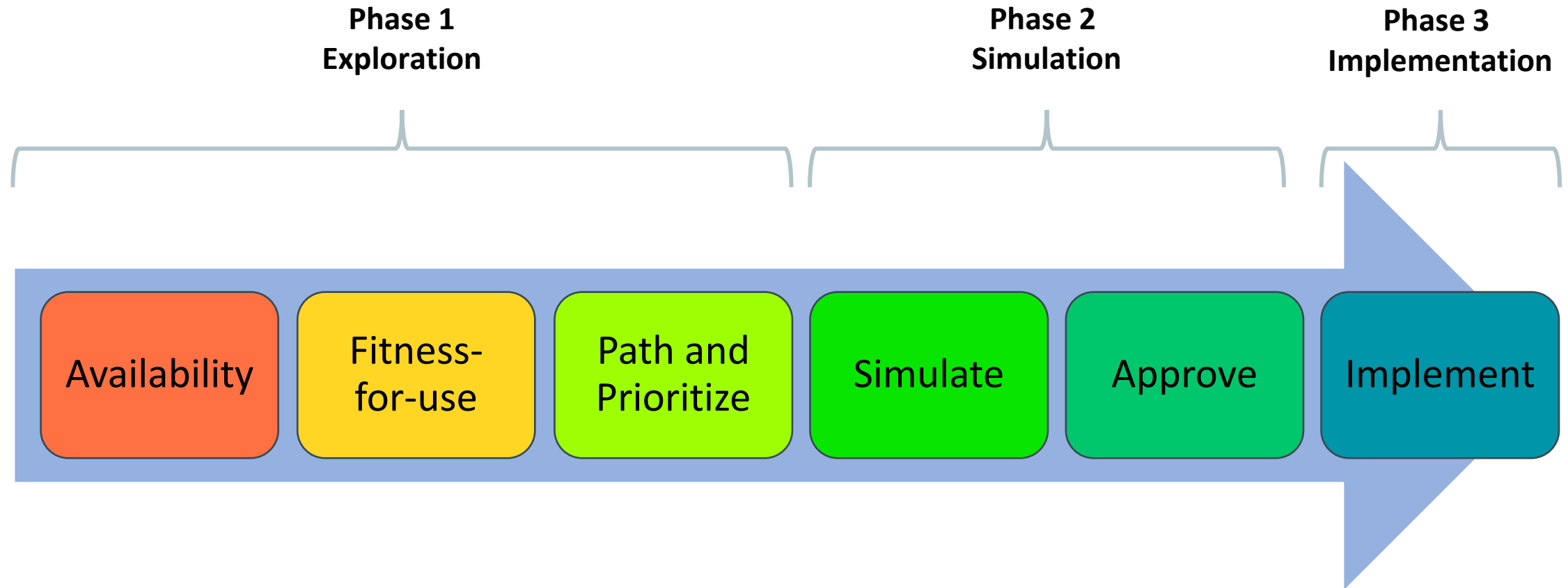- Work permits

Administrative Record Data

More examples of what we sometimes call **administrative records data**:

- UAA data from USPS

- NIXIE codes from USPS

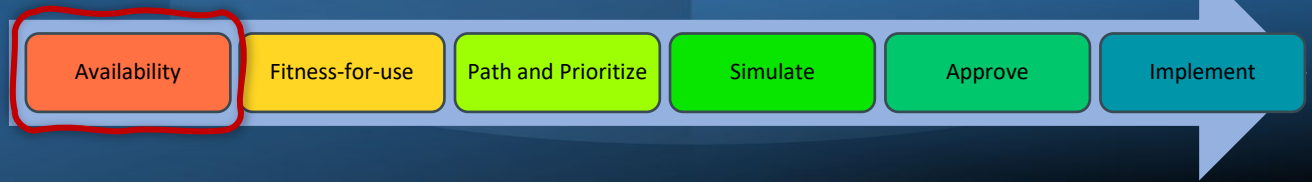- Third-party vendor data (example: lot size)

Why use administrative records data?

- Obligated by law (Title 13, U.S. Code) to use existing information in lieu of direct inquiry.

- Allowed to use these data for statistical purposes.

- Committed to reducing respondent burden and improving data quality.

Implementation Phases and Gates

Phase 1
**Exploration**

Phase 2
Simulation

Phase 3
Implementation

Availability | Fitness-for-use | Path and Prioritize | Simulate | Approve | Implement

Gates to Implementation

ACS DATA	AD REC DATA	CONTRACT INFO.
• Mandated Use	• Data Source	• Annual Cost
• ACS Product	• Years Available	• Delivery Frequency
• Geographic Need	• Geography Available	• Link to the ACS sample

Gates to Implementation
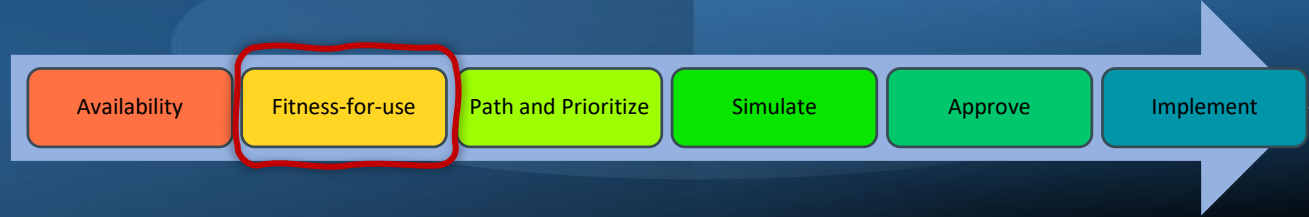
COVERAGE	How much Ad Rec data exists at lowest geographic levels?
CONCEPTUAL ALIGNMENT	How well do the Ad Rec data match when linked to the ACS sample?
TEMPORAL ALIGNMENT	How well does the Ad Rec data frequency align with the ACS annual publications?
DISCLOSURE AVOIDANCE	Are individuals or households easily identifiable?
RISK OVER TIME	Are there risks with the contract agreement or timing of data delivery?

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Gates to Implementation

Survey Life Cycle

Data Collection → Data Editing → Data Products
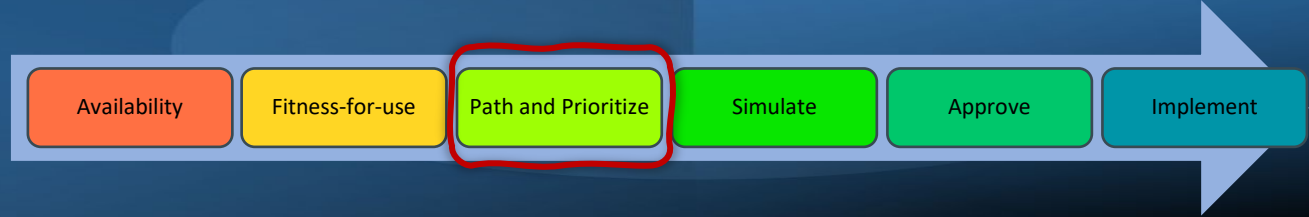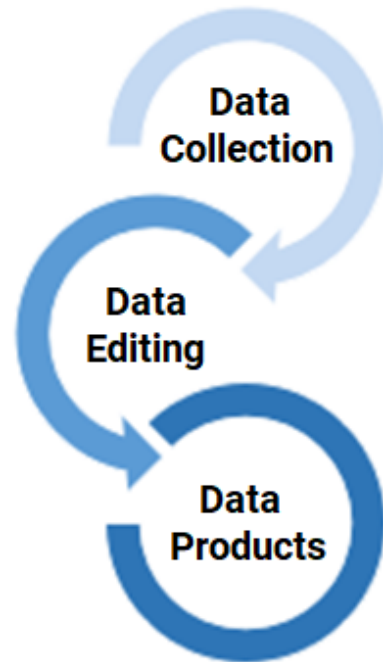
OPTIMIZING OPERATIONS	Use administrative data to inform ACS operations and processes.
FULL REPLACEMENT	Remove the question from the survey.
PARTIAL REPLACEMENT	Ask the survey question of some, but not all, respondents.
EDIT AND IMPUTATION	Keep the question on the survey. Use administrative data to replace or edit survey responses and impute missing responses.
ENHANCE DATA PRODUCTS	Add administrative data to ACS data to create more robust data products.

Gates to Implementation
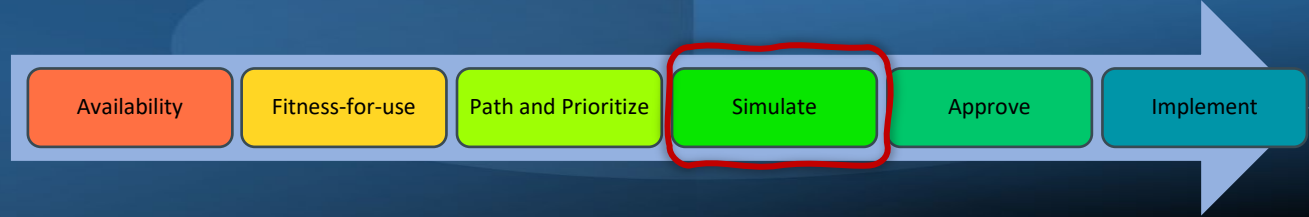
ITEM NONRESPONSE	How much did we reduce or increase item nonresponse?
BIAS	How much did we reduce or increase bias?
RELIABILITY	How much did we reduce or increase the reliability of the ACS data?
DOWNSTREAM IMPACT	Does adding Ad Rec data have a positive or negative impact on other survey items?
OVERALL DATA QUALITY	What is the overall impact to data quality in our published tables and other data products?

Status of Current Administrative Data Research for ACS Topics

Phase 1			Phase 2	Phase 3
Availability	**Fitness-for-use**	**Path and Prioritize**	**Simulate**	**Implement**
	Tenure, Race, Hispanic Origin, Relationship, Citizenship, Place of Birth, Educational Attainment, Veteran Status, Food Stamps, Migration, Income		Agricultural Sales, Year Built, Property Value, Property Taxes, Sex and Age	Acreage

Any questions?