

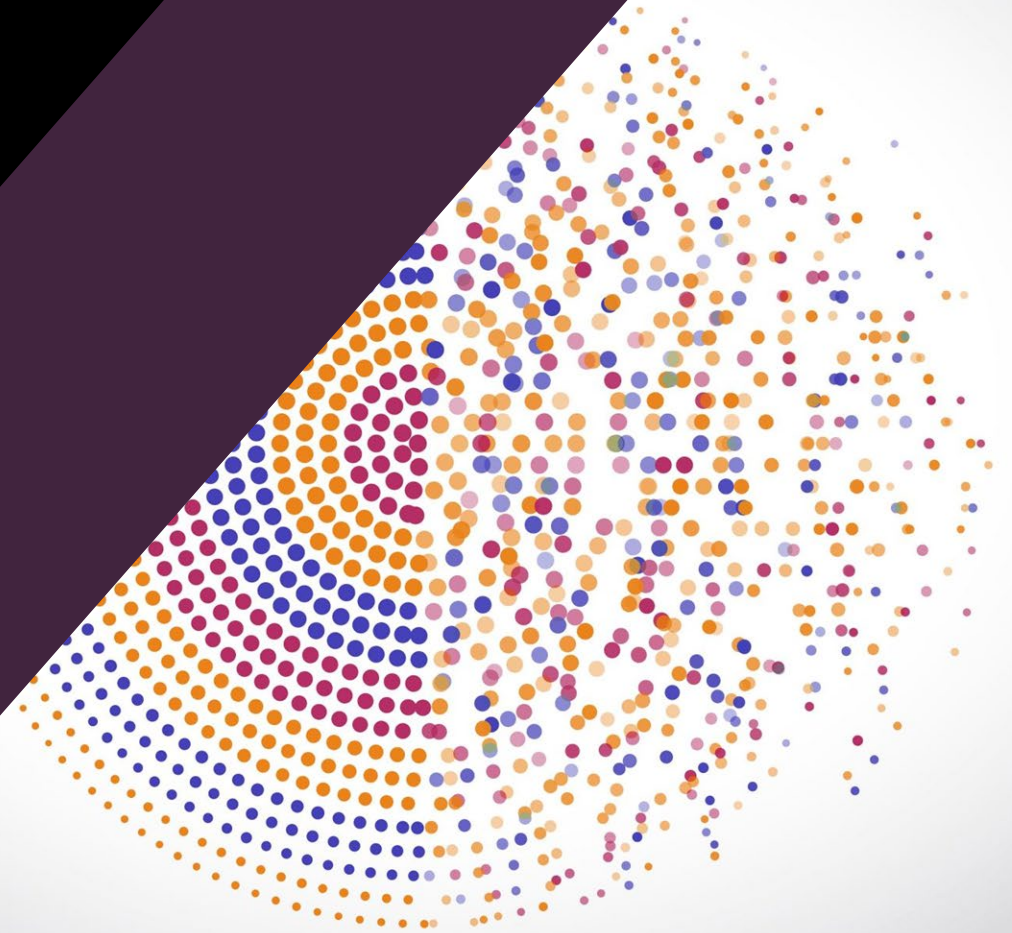
# STRENGTHENING THE AUTONOMY OF FEDERAL STATISTICS

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# Current Protections Insufficient

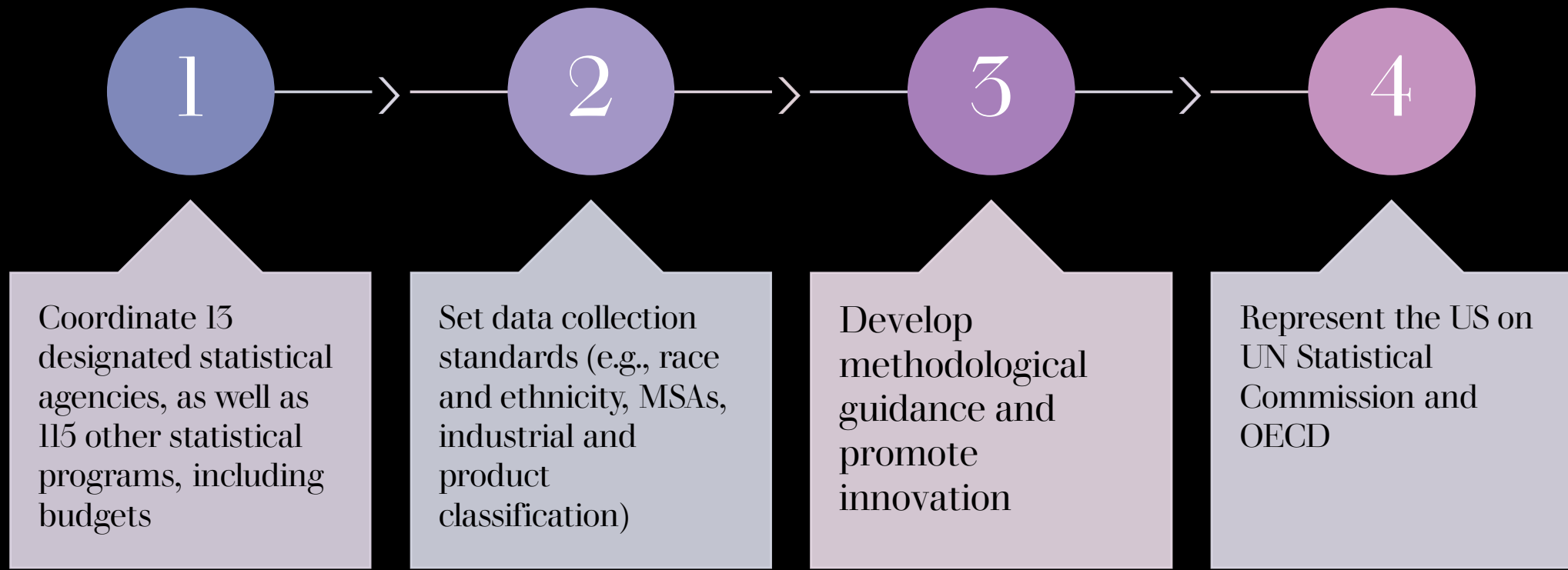
- They are suggestions, not laws
  - System developed norms over time, but norms can be ignored or broken
  - Very easy to overturn OMB guidelines, memoranda, and statistical policy directives
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# Statutory Protections are Inconsistent

- 13 Recognized statistical agencies
  - Over 100 units carrying out statistical activities across government
  - 24 agencies required to have a Statistical Official by the Evidence Act
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- Several agencies have no protections at all
  - No consequences if a cabinet secretary or agency head ignores directives when supported by the White House
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# U.S. Chief Statistician Responsibilities



# Chief Statistician Authorities Need Strengthening

- All duties are in the Paperwork Reduction Act
  - All authority in the Act resides in the OMB Director
  - Chief Statistician works through delegated authority
  - Can be overruled on all matters
  - Weak input into agency budgets
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# Big Questions

Should all statistical agency heads be political and confirmed by the Senate, political and appointed by the White House, or career? (currently mixed)

Should the Chief Statistician be political or career?

Should the position of the Chief Statistician be elevated or moved out of OMB?

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# More Questions

Should more protections be put into statutes protecting the independence of statistical agencies? What about statistical units?

What should be the consequences for violating the independence of the statistical agencies?

How far should the statutes go in specifying the balance between independence and being subject to overall administration policies?

Should the qualifications for agency heads be specified in law?

# International Models

- Canada, UK and other countries have more independence but more centralized statistics
  - U.S. was instrumental in creating international principles and practices
  - International pressure can sometimes be brought to bear but difficult to influence the U.S.
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# Recommendation

Strengthen statutory  
protections and report  
regularly on agreed upon  
metrics

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