

TO: The Leadership Conference Education Fund, Census and Data Equity Team

FROM: CLYDE

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SUBJECT: D-DAN Messaging Framework for 2025

I. INTRODUCTION

America is at a crossroads in how it collects and uses data. Rising concerns about trust in government, the role of technology, and the future of public health are shaping national debates and reshaping what it takes to make a compelling case for accurate data collection at all levels of government, as well as in the private sector.

Simultaneously, the Trump administration has taken direct aim at race-conscious policymaking and has curtailed data collection related to gender identity and sexual orientation. New narratives around AI governance, data privacy, and the “Make America Healthy Again” (MAHA) agenda are also changing how decision-makers perceive the risks and benefits of data disaggregation.

In this environment, advocates for accurate, comprehensive race and ethnicity data face both new challenges and new opportunities. Old frames centered solely on fairness or identity are no longer sufficient. Nor is relying on the same core set of allies.

Our Goal: A Strategic Pivot

This messaging framework was developed for the [Data Disaggregation Action Network \(D-DAN\)](#), a project of The Leadership Conference Education Fund, to help partners communicate the value of accurate and comprehensive race, ethnicity, and demographic data to new audiences in this evolving environment. The framework makes the case for accurate data as a foundation for high-performance systems in government, business, and technology.

We recommend moving beyond identity-focused arguments to demonstrate that data disaggregation serves practical, widely shared goals: smarter innovation, more effective governance, stronger public health systems, and better risk management. That pivot opens the door to coalitions with:

- Corporate executives and efficiency-first leaders who prioritize profitability, operational efficiency, risk reduction, and innovation.
- MAHA-aligned audiences focused on efficient public health outcomes, financial responsibility, personal responsibility, and transparency.
- Center-right policymakers concerned with U.S. competitiveness, AI leadership, national security, and government efficiency.

This framework helps communicate these benefits in a language that resonates across sectoral and political divides, putting forward the case for comprehensive data collection through shared values of innovation, effectiveness, and responsible governance.

II. OUR MESSAGE FRAMEWORK

NARRATIVE

America makes high-stakes decisions every day. These decisions impact public health, economic investments, education, and emerging technologies, among others. Yet too often, they are based on incomplete or outdated information.

When we lump everyone together and treat communities as monoliths, we miss critical differences and insights that lead to inefficiencies, missed opportunities, and often avoidable harm. Without accurate and comprehensive demographic data, businesses and governments are making high-stakes decisions in the dark. That's a liability we can't afford.

Granular data help achieve accuracy, performance, and results that work. Whether it's developing AI that works for every user, tailoring health care investments that save lives, or ensuring that workforce programs serve the communities who need them, decisions are only as good as the data they're based on. The [Innovation Framework](#) developed by the Center for Civil Rights and Technology, a joint project of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and The Leadership Conference Education Fund, provides guidelines for companies to integrate principles around fairness and efficiency into core business practices to help them build better, more competitive AI products. Accurate, comprehensive demographic data are a competitive advantage, a public accountability tool, and a foundation for smarter innovation and governance.

What We Mean by Comprehensive, Accurate Demographic Data

Accurate, comprehensive demographic data are data that reflect the full picture of the lived experiences of our communities throughout the United States, not broad categories that mask critical differences.

These kind of data are:

- **Detailed:** They go beyond broad labels like “Asian” or “Latino” to include specific communities, such as Vietnamese, Bangladeshi, Dominican, or Afro-Caribbean populations. These distinctions matter because lived experiences, outcomes, and access to services often vary dramatically between groups.
- **Consistent:** They are collected and reported in a uniform manner across systems, agencies, and sectors, allowing for effective comparison and action, whether in public health, education, AI development, or workforce planning.
- **Actionable:** They provide the granularity needed to make informed, tailored decisions. That might mean identifying a community disproportionately affected by an illness, an algorithm that performs worse for a specific group, or a training program that’s just missing the mark.
- **Accessible:** Public data are, and should function like, a utility and be readily available to the communities they affect. Accessible data empower leaders, journalists, researchers, businesses, and everyday people to understand what’s happening in our communities and create solutions that actually work.
- **Ethical and privacy-conscious:** They are gathered transparently, with community input, and have safeguards in place to protect individuals and prevent misuse and abuse — especially important in a time of growing concern around data privacy and government overreach.

We need to ensure that the decisions we make — in boardrooms, statehouses, or federal agencies — can be trusted by our constituencies and are informed by the full picture, not a blurry snapshot.

VISION STATEMENT

We envision a country where decisions in business, government, philanthropy, and technology are trustworthy and grounded in accurate, comprehensive demographic data that reflect on-the-ground conditions — not built on averages or assumptions or wishcasting. This kind of clarity will help leaders act in a more tailored manner, avoid preventable failures, lead with confidence, and deliver real results.

TOPLINE MESSAGE

Accurate and complete demographic data help us govern smarter, assist others more strategically, innovate with integrity, and compete on the global stage. These data reduce risk, improve performance, and ensure our tools, systems, and policies can be trusted and actually work.

III. KEY MESSAGES: PILLARS & PROOF POINTS

PILLAR 1: ACCURACY & EFFECTIVENESS

Accuracy matters. Whether it's a public health intervention, a hiring algorithm, or a consumer insight tool, decisions are only as good as the data driving them.

Without comprehensive, accurate demographic data, policymakers and business leaders are forced to rely on incomplete and potentially biased information. That results in policies and products that fail to reach their intended audiences, waste resources, or even cause harm and break trust.

Accurate data help leaders see clearly, tailor solutions, and act with confidence. They are the foundation for getting things right the first time.

Proof Points

- + Enables smarter resource allocation and more effective policy:** Governments that collect and use complete demographic data for their intended use for the provision of services and understanding of needs can craft better tailored legislation and services — improving outcomes and reducing waste while still ensuring privacy and confidentiality.
 - EX: Highline Public Schools in Washington State [use race and ethnicity data](#) to identify student needs more precisely and deliver targeted academic support. This has helped the district strengthen programs like dual-language instruction and connect students and families with relevant community resources — improving outcomes and making smarter use of public dollars.
- + Protects financial investments:** Failure to understand demographic nuance can result in costly missteps, such as product launches that flop in key markets or public

programs that miss their intended constituents or cause unintentional harm and waste. Detailed data help ensure big investments are grounded in reality.

- EX: A [study](#) in Chicago on a plant-based pasta product found that including the word “Ramen” in the product name triggered different reactions among Chinese American, Japanese American, and Mexican American consumers. The results showed that cultural background shapes product perception in ways that broad labels like “Asian American” miss. With more detailed data, companies can better predict market responses and tailor their products and marketing strategies, avoiding costly missteps.

+ Improves public health programs: Accurate demographic data help pinpoint health gaps. That means agencies can structure interventions in nutrition and environmental health, such as addressing exposure to harmful substances and improving access to nutritious food. This focus on allocating resources where they’re needed can help achieve better health outcomes and reduce the prevalence of chronic diseases.

- EX: A [study of college students](#) found that those who are from low-income backgrounds consumed significantly more unhealthy food than their peers during freshman year, but those disparities disappeared by sophomore year. Identifying trends like this with accurate demographic data allows schools and health agencies to target nutrition programs to make the biggest impact.

PILLAR 2: RISK MITIGATION & MANAGEMENT

When leaders rely on overly broad or outdated information, they open the door to serious consequences — from product failures and compliance violations to public backlash and litigation. Accurate, granular, and comprehensive demographic data help organizations see weak points and vulnerabilities before they become liabilities.

Whether you're building AI systems, allocating health care resources, or drafting legislation, data clarity reduces guesswork and helps you operate confidently in a high-stakes environment. Good data, handled with care, will insure against costly mistakes.

Proof Points

+ Reduces legal and regulatory risk: Accurate, granular, and comprehensive demographic data help organizations comply with anti-discrimination laws, civil

rights requirements, and federal data standards, thus reducing exposure to lawsuits, investigations, and penalties.

- EX: In 2024, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) [sued 15 employers](#) across retail, construction, and manufacturing for failing to submit required workforce demographic reports. These EEO-1 reports, mandatory for companies with 100 or more employees, track demographics by job category to enforce anti-discrimination laws. The lawsuits demonstrate how inadequate data collection can lead to legal penalties and reputational damage.

+ Prevents reputational fallout: Data gaps can lead to biased, unfair, or inequitable outcomes that damage public trust. Many companies have faced backlash after releasing tools or policies that didn't work well for specific communities, often because they failed to test or analyze disparate impacts by race or ethnicity.

- EX: A [study at MIT Media Lab](#) revealed higher error rates for women with darker skin tones in commercial gender classification systems as a result of running incomplete and biased data through AI systems. This led to significant media coverage and prompted companies to reevaluate their AI technologies, highlighting the reputational risks of not addressing such biases.

+ Improves crisis response and public safety: Leaders need clarity, especially in a crisis. Access to disaggregated demographic data during emergencies (like pandemics or natural disasters) helps institutions respond more quickly, efficiently, and effectively, reducing harm and ensuring resources go where they're needed.

- EX: In 2020, Asian Health Services (AHS), a Federally Qualified Health Center in Oakland, [used detailed data](#) to uncover a spike in COVID-19 cases within the Vietnamese community. This spike was hidden by aggregate data that showed lower overall rates among Asians. This insight led to pop-up clinics in Little Saigon, which helped to contain the outbreak quickly and locally.

+ Ensures data privacy:¹ [81 percent of Americans](#) are deeply concerned about how companies use the data they collect on individuals and over 70% express similar

¹ [Recent research from Third Way](#) found that concerns over digital privacy violations are among the most persuasive messages for Independents and non-college voters. Strong privacy protections are key to earning and maintaining public trust with respect to government data collection.

concerns about government-collected data. [Response rates to public surveys like the American Community Survey are declining](#)², likely in part due to this erosion of trust. That matters for everyone: companies rely heavily on government-collected data to inform business decisions, just as much as the data they collect themselves.

When both public and private actors use comprehensive demographic data only for its intended purposes, and protect against data abuse and misuse, they strengthen public trust and avoid reputational risks.

- EX: In February 2025, [DeepSeek AI suffered a data leak](#), exposing more than 1 million sensitive records on the dark web. Considering the large troves of data that AI systems run on, future data breaches are likely unless companies take the proper steps to protect their users' data.

PILLAR 3: RESPONSIBLE INNOVATION & COMPETITIVENESS

In a rapidly evolving global economy, U.S. leadership depends on our ability to develop technologies and systems that work for the full range of people who use them. Demographic data that are detailed, consistent, and comprehensive give innovators the clarity to build better products, reach underserved markets, and maintain U.S. leadership in a competitive global economy.

Businesses, policymakers, and countries that understand their audience in detail will out-innovate and out-deliver those that don't.

Proof Points

- ✚ **Unlocks new markets and revenue opportunities:** Companies that use accurate, comprehensive demographic data can identify unmet needs among growing populations, enabling companies to expand customer bases and design more inclusive and accessible products that work for more people and markets.
 - EX: In 2022, Microsoft launched its adaptive accessories designed to provide people with disabilities greater access to technology. Through leveraging

² The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau that collects detailed demographic, social, economic, and housing data from a sample of households every year. Unlike the decennial census, which provides a population snapshot every 10 years, the ACS delivers timely, annual data used to inform government funding, policy decisions, and business planning across the country.

accurate data to understand how consumers were using their products, they were able to tap into a market with a [buying power of more than \\$13 trillion](#).

- + Keeps America ahead of global competitors:** To stay ahead in the race for AI and tech leadership, the United States must build systems that perform reliably across all communities. Clarity in demographic data gives American innovators a critical edge in developing scalable, effective technologies that strengthen our economic and strategic leadership. Having better, more comprehensive data to train and run AI systems means better, more competitive products.
 - Demographic data combined with behavioral insights helps U.S. analysts [detect foreign influence campaigns](#) targeting specific communities. By identifying which demographic groups are being impacted, officials can fine tune counter-messaging and strengthen national security responses.
- + Builds responsible AI systems that scale:** Adults across the United States are [extremely skeptical about AI](#) and are unsure about its benefits. Training algorithms on broad or incomplete data can lead to systems failing in the real world, which could lead to declining consumer trust in a skeptical U.S. market. Comprehensive demographic data enable AI systems to perform more reliably, detect problems early, and scale without introducing risk.
 - EX: Facial recognition tools often perform poorly across different groups because they were trained on a limited pool of users. For example, [a landmark MIT study](#) found that facial recognition systems had an error rate of just 0.8 percent for light-skinned men, but as high as 34.7 percent for dark-skinned women, because the algorithms were predominantly trained on faces of white men. Companies that retrained models with broader datasets saw accuracy improvements.

IV. TALKING POINTS

These talking points are designed for use in meetings, briefings, public statements, and advocacy materials to communicate the value of accurate, comprehensive demographic data in a way that resonates across ideological and sectoral divides.

CORPORATE LEADERS

Lead with: Innovation, efficiency, risk reduction, bottom line, and competitiveness.

- **Better data equal better performance.**
 - Business decisions — whether evaluating a company’s workforce or developing a new product — are only as good as the data behind them. Without accurate and comprehensive data, decision-making is reduced to guesswork.
- **Avoid costly mistakes.**
 - Incomplete data can lead to misfires in product design, misreading markets, and reputational backlash. Investing in accurate demographic data is a short-term, low-cost way to avoid long-term, high-cost failures.
- **Scale responsibly.**
 - Building AI and digital tools without representative, real-world data leads to systems that fail to meet the needs of key users or attract legal and public scrutiny. High-quality demographic data enable scalable, resilient innovation that works for a variety of users.
- **Stay ahead in a competitive global economy.**
 - Countries like China are investing heavily in AI and automation. America’s edge comes from designing tools that perform reliably for real people in complex environments. Comprehensive demographic data are to our advantage.
- **Data responsibility builds trust.**
 - Consumers, employees, and regulators increasingly expect transparency and accountability in how data are used. Ethical, privacy-conscious data practices are a brand imperative and a legal imperative. When people trust that their information will be protected and used appropriately, they would likely be more willing to participate in surveys and other forms of data collection. That results in more complete, more representative data and better decisions.

MAHA-ALIGNED AUDIENCES

Lead with: Public health and nutrition outcomes, personal responsibility, protecting families, local control, transparency, and making government programs work for the people.

- **Good data mean better health.**
 - Accurate demographic data help local and state leaders direct resources where they can be most effective — from nutrition programs to environmental protections — improving health outcomes and reducing chronic disease rates.
- **Reduce waste.**

- We all want less waste and more accountability. Accurate data make it easier to see what's working, cut what's not, and keep public spending focused on real needs, not political games.
- Complete, tailored data help ensure health and safety investments reach the right people and make them healthier.
- **Protect your family and community from environmental threats.**
 - From air quality to food access, understanding how risks affect specific communities helps prevent harm. If we can't see the problem clearly, we can't fix it.
 - Whether it's air quality, water safety, or toxic exposure, data that show exactly who is affected can help local leaders take action before families become sick.
- **It's about keeping your family healthy, not feeding a bureaucracy.**
 - Accurate information helps health programs reach people who want help without forcing one-size-fits-all "solutions" on everyone.
- **Privacy and accountability matter.**
 - Public data should be treated with care and respect. Transparency and clear guardrails can protect individuals while still ensuring programs meet the needs of all families.

CENTER-RIGHT POLICYMAKERS

Lead with: Government efficiency, economic competitiveness, risk reduction, and data privacy.

- **Strong data lead to smarter governance.**
 - Comprehensive demographic data enable local, state, and federal governments to serve constituents more effectively and avoid wasteful spending. Having the right data enables limited, effective interventions that solve problems and respect taxpayer dollars.
- **Safeguard U.S. leadership in AI and tech.**
 - America's ability to compete globally, especially against countries like China, depends on developing technologies that work for everyone. You can't build globally competitive systems using incomplete data.
- **Reduce liability, increase confidence.**

- Whether it's avoiding civil rights lawsuits or ensuring public trust in emergency response, quality data help institutions do the job right and avoid expensive backlash.
- **Protect privacy while preserving clarity.**
 - We need to collect data in ways that are secure, ethical, and transparent. That's how we ensure government accountability while protecting individual rights.

V. LANGUAGE DO'S AND DON'TS

This section guides the terminology and framing choices that best resonate with center-right audiences and corporate leaders, especially in politically mixed or skeptical environments. It is designed to help D-DAN members and allies speak clearly, confidently, and strategically about comprehensive demographic data, while avoiding language that can trigger backlash or signal ideological alignment.

LANGUAGE DO'S

Use this language	Why it works
"Accurate," "complete," or "comprehensive" data	Emphasizes clarity, reliability, and performance without invoking identity-first framing.
"Tailored" (instead of "targeted")	Suggests thoughtful adaptation, not surveillance or special treatment.
"Transparency," "efficiency," "effective," "innovation," and "performance"	Appeals to values and outcomes prioritized by center-right and MAHA-aligned audiences.

“Data as a utility”	Reinforces accessibility and accountability, thereby avoiding concerns about institutional overreach.
“Privacy-conscious” and “ethical data practices”	Builds trust with audiences concerned about surveillance or overcollection.

LANGUAGE DON'TS

Avoid this language	Why it can backfire
“Precision”	Feels technical and can suggest exclusion or overreach. Consider “clarity” or “completeness.”
“Diverse communities” or “diversity data”	Often read as DEI-adjacent, which can be polarizing in some environments. Emphasize specificity instead.
“Social justice” or “equity” (in isolation)	Strong ideological signals that may alienate some stakeholders. Focus instead on outcomes like health, performance, and fairness.
“Institutions” or “systems”	May activate distrust. Refer to “communities,” “agencies,” or “leaders” depending on context.
“Disaggregated data” (alone, for general audiences)	Jargon for non-experts. Use alternatives like “detailed demographic data,” “granular data,” or “group-specific data” when communicating publicly.