

## **Questions for Richard Coffin, Chief of Research & Advocacy, USA Facts**

### **1. What is the mission of USA Facts?**

#### **a. How does USA Facts carry-out its mission?**

USAFacts' mission is to "Empower Americans with facts." We do this by aggregating government data from federal, state, and local government sources and making it easily accessible through our website and products. We exclusively use data from the government and only show historical actuals rather than make any projections to stay unbiased and non-partisan. We believe that government data, funded by taxpayers, should be easily accessible as a foundational set of facts to ground conversation, debate, decisions, and policy. Some of our core products include our website USAFacts.org which aims to answer Americans' questions using data; our annual report for the United States which shows government revenue, spending, and outcomes; our 10-K for government that provides a comprehensive understanding of government using the strict analytical framework that the SEC mandates all public companies use to provide unbiased and accurate information to investors; and a State of the Union report that provides a numbers-based view of the current state of the nation prior to the President's speech. We also produce data visualizations that provide context about key issues and create relevant, data-based content that we share through articles, social media posts, and a weekly newsletter.

### **2. How does USA Facts evaluate its effectiveness?**

USAFacts evaluates effectiveness through two primary methods: 1) measurable analytics from our website, and 2) anecdotal evidence of our mission and impact.

Analytically, we measure success through traffic to our website. Our primary goal is to provide data to Americans and answer their questions, and as such, we measure the number of people who come to our site as a proxy for success. We are especially focused on traffic that comes from search engines to gauge whether we are answering questions that are top of mind for Americans. We also look for engagement with the data (such as shares and downloads), opens and forwards of our weekly data-based newsletter, and shares of our social media posts of data and charts related to topics that are in the news.

Anecdotally, we see success through individual moments where we witness our work helping individuals have discussions or make decisions that are based in data. For example, our data was shared on the CDC's website through the first several months of the COVID pandemic after we undertook the difficult but necessary work of aggregating data on cases and deaths from states. We have seen success convening bipartisan groups of Members of Congress and staff where conversations about data were followed by substantive, numbers-based policy discussions. And we have been asked for data and policy recommendations by Members of Congress from both parties which has invigorated our sense of mission and belief that access to good, high quality government data is a bipartisan topic with wide appeal.

### **3. How much engagement does USA Facts have with Congress, its members, and its staff?**

Since our founding in 2015, we have engaged with Members of Congress and staff in a variety of ways. Some examples include convening bipartisan groups in both chambers to discuss data; providing ideas about and feedback on legislative efforts to improve government data and its use in policymaking;

holding open discussions with Chiefs of Staff and legislative directors about challenges finding and using data; and providing data and charts to Congressional offices upon request. This year, we are undertaking more intentional efforts to partner with Congress to provide data that is useful to both Members and staff. We intend to be a resource for anyone who wants access to data to improve their work in Congress, and we are working to open dialogue across both chambers and parties, perform analysis, and potentially create new digital products for use in understanding the current state of the country and crafting legislation using data.