



U.S. Department of Commerce  
National Technical Information Service  
Alexandria, VA 22312



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Contact: Gail Porter, [gail.porter@nist.gov](mailto:gail.porter@nist.gov),  
301-975-3392

## **Commerce Secretary Appoints Avi Bender as NTIS Head, Unveils New Joint Venture Opportunities in Data Sharing/Services**

Washington, D.C. – The Commerce Department’s National Technical Information Service (NTIS) has reached a turning point. The agency published a [Federal Register notice \(FRN\) announcing a new joint venture partnership \(JVP\) opportunity](#) focused on improving access, analysis, and use of federal data and it is welcoming a new director, Avi Bender, formerly the chief technology officer at the U.S. Census Bureau.

Since its founding in the early 1960s, NTIS has met its mission of widely disseminating federal science and engineering information and data largely through its database of more than 3 million publications in 350 subject areas. As technology has evolved, NTIS has increasingly focused on providing its federal customers with online data and services and the new JVP data program will accelerate that trend.

“We are excited about this new direction for NTIS,” said Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker. “Finding innovative ways to utilize the federal government’s expansive data resources will provide great opportunities for public-private sector collaboration.”

“Data is a major currency of the 21st century,” added Bender. “NTIS has unique legislative authority to match federal agencies that collect, use, and disseminate valuable data sets with highly qualified private sector partners. We want to make it easier for federal agencies to efficiently use and share their data in agile and innovative ways.”

In mid-2015, Secretary Pritzker [set a new focus for NTIS](#)—consistent with existing authorities—to “expand access to the Department’s and the broader federal government’s data resources, with emphasis on data concerning the nation’s economy, population, and environment.”

NTIS is entirely fee supported and receives no direct appropriations. It is one of very few federal agencies with the legal authority to establish joint venture partnerships. The NTIS joint ventures will be business partnerships on projects not amenable to typical contracts or available commercial solutions that require fast execution and innovative technologies. In addition, the federal government and the private sector partner will jointly plan and execute the project to meet an agency mission need and will share any fees that may be generated.

Bender has been instrumental in spurring key IT innovation and modernization efforts at the Census Bureau. He has previous executive leadership experience with other federal agencies and several global commercial IT sector technology and service providers.

According to the FRN, NTIS is seeking proposals from potential joint venture partners “to improve access, data interoperability, search, or use of federal data and data services to drive innovation and business outcome.” Activities conducted by joint ventures may include:

- 1) designing, testing, analyzing, or demonstrating the application of federal data and data services, either alone or in some combination with non-federal data;
- 2) leveraging the private sector’s knowledge and expertise in managing data and data sets;
- 3) helping create suites of products, platforms and services that meet the needs of businesses, innovators, government agencies or others; and
- 4) enhancing data discovery, usability, interoperability, standards, analytics, and forecasting, or data infrastructure and security.

The joint venture opportunities require investments by partners and may provide a revenue-sharing opportunity. NTIS will accept proposals from for-profit, non-profit or research-performing service organizations as potential private sector JVPs.

Following review of the proposals, NTIS will select multiple well-qualified private sector IT and data service providers based on criteria detailed in the FRN. The selected companies or organizations will then be available to partner with NTIS on data-related projects funded by other federal agencies in support of their specific missions or through fees for use of data services.

"Federal agencies require scalable, secure, interoperable, and innovative data solutions from the time of collection through open data dissemination, analysis, and use. Our JV business model can dramatically enhance the federal government's ability to deliver better, more meaningful data anytime and anywhere," said Bender. "Our federal customers have varying missions but data is a common connective tissue that can be transformative when you create the right mash ups through interoperability that improve discovery and deliver important business outcomes."

The *Federal Register* notice mentions several federal priorities likely to be supported by the new NTIS-enabled joint ventures including big data, open data, open access, cyber-physical systems, smart cities, and the internet of things.

An in-person informational session and webcast to augment information in the FRN and answer questions from the public is scheduled for Thursday, July 7, at 9 a.m., Eastern Time. For location details and to register go to the NTIS homepage at [ntis.gov](http://ntis.gov).

The deadline for submitting proposals is August 1, 2016.

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