

New Report Offers Policymakers Data-Driven Options to Prevent Improper Payments in Federal Programs

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, March 31, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Data Foundation today released Program Integrity Through Data Infrastructure: Options for Reducing Improper Payments, a new report developed through the Fiscal Intelligence Initiative with support from the Peter G. Peterson Foundation. The report presents 10 ranked policy options to improve data infrastructure and modernize verification systems to prevent improper payments across federal benefit programs before payments are made, rather than after.

The report identifies a root cause behind much of the federal government's improper payment problem: data quality gaps. In Fiscal Year 2024, more than \$162 billion in improper payments were reported government-wide, according to a report last year from the [U.S. Government Accountability Office](#) (GAO). Of that total, an estimated \$46.8 billion stemmed directly from failures in identity, marital status, and death data verification, which are challenges that better data infrastructure could address.

"This is the right time to put these policy options on the table," said Amanda Cash, Senior Director of the Center on Data Policy at the Data Foundation. "The technological advances now available to us, particularly in artificial intelligence, allow for far more sophisticated approaches to prevention than we could have deployed even a few years ago. The world is changing rapidly, and the proposals in this report are designed to meet the moment."

The report arrives as policymakers from both sides of the aisle are actively seeking data-driven solutions to longstanding inefficiencies in federal spending. Both Congress and the Executive Branch have recently taken important steps to strengthen program integrity for federal spending. Under last year's Executive Order 14249, with additional guidance from the White House Office of Management and Budget, federal agencies are now required to share more data with the U.S. Department of Treasury's Do Not Pay data system, which helps verify a recipient's identity, eligibility, and bank account information before a federal payment is made. Additionally, in early 2026, Congress [passed legislation](#) to improve the quality and timeliness of death data used in eligibility verification. These are strong signals that policymakers continue to actively seek the type of targeted, technical reforms highlighted in this report.

The Data Foundation's report presents 10 ranked options organized across three categories: data infrastructure enhancements, verification system modernization, and coordination and

innovation. The options are graded by feasibility and projected impact, giving Congress and federal agencies a clear menu of approaches from administrative actions that can begin immediately to more comprehensive reforms requiring statutory changes. The five highest-impact options, including mandatory disbursement screening and modernization of the Public Assistance Reporting Information System, have the potential to generate billions of dollars of savings.

The options emphasize a shift from "pay and chase" models when improper payments are detected and recovered after the fact, toward near real-time verification and prevention. Such a shift has been made possible by modern technology, stronger federal-state data partnerships, and growing political will.

The Peter G. Peterson Foundation, which supported the report through our Fiscal Intelligence Initiative, has long championed responsible fiscal stewardship as deficits and debt reach historic levels. In 2026, the national debt surpassed \$39 trillion, with annual deficits now accounting for nearly 6 percent of national gross domestic product.

"This new report from the Data Foundation provides leaders in Washington with actionable, non-partisan solutions that can make a meaningful improvement in America's fiscal outlook," said Brett Loper, Executive Vice President of Policy at the Peter G. Peterson Foundation. "Addressing fraud and other types of improper payments are an important step in putting our nation's finances on a stronger, more sustainable path."

The policy options in the report were developed through a series of discussions with experts in program integrity from across the government, research, and oversight communities. They are designed to work within existing legal frameworks, build on proven systems rather than replace them, and respect the privacy of benefit recipients.

Congress and federal agencies have an opportunity to apply data strategies and take action to improve how benefit programs verify eligibility and prevent improper payments. The Data Foundation report is a starting point for those who want to take advantage of that opportunity. For those who want to continue the conversation and contribute more policy options for strengthening program integrity through better data infrastructure, send us your ideas at impact@datafoundation.org.

[Read the full report.](#)

About the Data Foundation: The Data Foundation is a national non-profit organization that champions the use of open data and evidence-informed public policy to make society better for everyone. We are the trusted authority on the use of open, accessible data to fuel a more efficient, effective, and accountable government; spark innovation; and provide insights to the country's most pressing challenges. As a nonpartisan think tank, we conduct research, collaborative thought leadership, and advocacy programs that advance practical policies for the creation and use of accessible, trustworthy data.

About the Peter G. Peterson Foundation: The Peter G. Peterson Foundation is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that is dedicated to increasing public awareness of the nature and urgency of key fiscal challenges threatening America's future, and to accelerating action on them. To address these challenges successfully, we work to bring Americans together to find and implement sensible, long-term solutions that transcend age, party lines and ideological divides in order to achieve real results. To learn more, please visit www.pgpf.org.

J.B. Wogan

Data Foundation

+1 202-964-1130

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[LinkedIn](#)

[X](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/902971389>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.