Data for the Public Good: Challenges and Barriers in the Context of Cities

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Goals

• What is needed?
• How do we build data that will assist cities in accomplishing the social goals and address the well-being of residents?
• Describe both the ingredients that are necessary to build data resources, but also the barriers that prevent sustained effort
Information needs and data development

• Crime, school outcomes, public health care and surveillance, early care and education, workforce development, after-school activities, and human service receipt

• The Allegheny County Department of Human Services’ Data Warehouse in Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh)
  – child welfare, behavioral health, public school, welfare program, corrections, housing, and aging services
  – Front-line workers are able to access information on individuals or families from other agencies to inform their information-gathering or service provision.
  – Data is also used to conduct system-wide analyses to support research, strategic planning, needs assessment, and program evaluation.
How to develop capacity in city agencies

• the key ingredients for success include:

1. strong support from executive leadership across government agencies;
2. a track record of success;
3. no data breaches;
4. lawyers and laws generally supporting of data sharing, and
5. securing independent funding for most of the work.
Example: Illinois

- 30 years of relationships with government leaders
- Includes data from early childhood, all educational levels, employment, social problems – crime, abuse/neglect, poverty
- Addressing the information needs of policymakers, including evaluation, monitoring, conducting ad hoc analyses
- Maintaining timely data
Sustainability

• These efforts appear and disappear
• In order to sustain these efforts over time
  – new leadership needs to be educated about the importance of existing data efforts, and new relationships based on mutual trust and need must be formed.
  – When strong relationships with middle-level staff and legal agreements are in place, data-sharing and utilization can continue without pause.
  – Often, and ideally, data delivery, with the proper legal permissions, is a hands-off process that occurs regardless of whether anybody is watching.