Centering equity & engagement in the ethical use of administrative data for housing policy and planning

Dennis Culhane

Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP)

University of Pennsylvania

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The Current Moment is Complicated.

Governments have more capacity than ever before to share and use longitudinal administrative data for analytics and decision-making.

This represents an improvement on:

- Hunches
- Doing what we've always done "just because"
- Limited surveys/small sampling

But administrative data and analytic tools are not:

- Reflective of lived experience
- Historically contextualized
- Good at distinguishing correlation vs. causation
- A measurement of what matters most

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Our Workgroup's "Charge"

- As data stewards, agencies must acknowledge and compensate for the harms and bias baked into data, into practice, and into cultural understandings and perceptions of populations served by government agencies.

- **The Centering Equity Workgroup sought to co-create best practices and strategies for administrative data reuse in government and social services that work towards equity.**

Thank you to Amy Hawn Nelson (chair) and all members of the workgroup for shaping the content of this slide and presentation.

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Original Guiding Questions

❑ How can governance structures be implemented to ensure a wide range of voices?

❑ What are the consequences of excluding community voices?

❑ What principles and mechanisms must be in place for inclusive engagement?

❑ What risks are involved in engaging communities in building and using data infrastructure?

❑ Which decision points should be informed by a broad set of community stakeholders?

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Adopting Government Alliance for Racial Equity (GARE) Framework

NORMALIZE

1) How has your collaborative acknowledged the importance of a racial equity lens?

ORGANIZE

2) How will the community and government learn, work, and be mutually accountable to inform, evaluate, and co-create policies for equity?
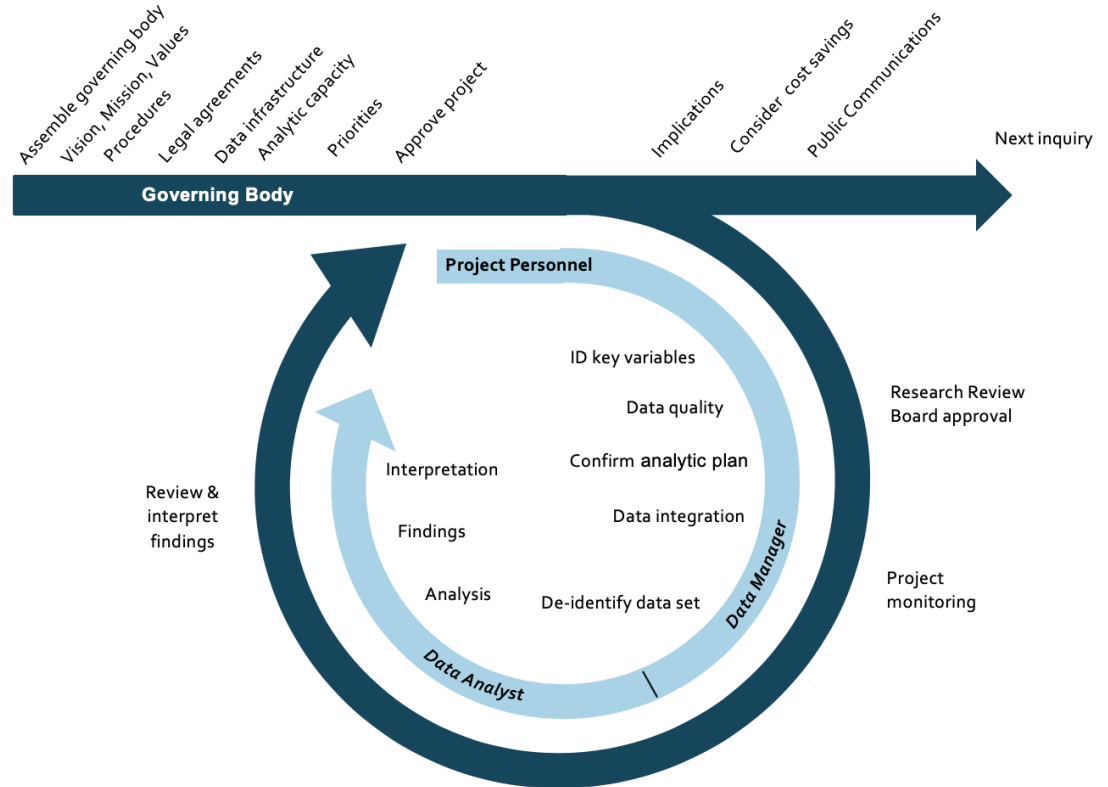
OPERATIONALIZE

3) What approaches will be most effective in capacity building, collaborating and power sharing among stakeholders?

Where do we need to center equity?

Where can bias appear?

- Planning

- Data collection

- Access & analysis

- Algorithms

- Reporting & Dissemination

Planning

Negative practices

- Token "representation" in agenda-setting

- Not involving community members with lived experiences or agency workers

- Using only historical administrative data

Positive Practices

- Community voice in deciding how to frame the "problem"

- Capacity building for community/service participants to work together on agenda-setting

- Understanding the history of policy/system harm/opportunity

- Data literacy efforts

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Data Collection

Negative practices

- Bias
  - Selection
  - Confirmation

- Issues of data integrity
  - Missing data ("opt outs")
  - Different inputs

- Insufficient data labels (e.g. losing important data in aggregation)

Positive Practices

- Collecting only what's necessary

- Sharing key data to reduce additional burden on clients

- Developing definitions of data collectively

- Including qualitative stories to contextualize quantitative data

Access & Analysis

Negative practices

- Access limited to "elite" researchers

- Not examining larger social conditions (e.g. poverty, housing segregation, education)

- "One size fits all" approaches to analysis

Positive Practices

- Open data request process that has clear policies and procedures

- Participatory research to bring multiple perspectives to interpretations of the data

- Correlation of place to outcomes (e.g. redlining data)

- **Disaggregating data based on context**

Disaggregating data based on context: Gaps Analysis and Needs Assessments

Negative practices

- Treat race, ethnicity and other demographic as facts

- Not including community voices in the interpretation of gaps

- Stopping with the Results, and not pressing onward with problem solving and action plans

Positive Practices

- Engage community to identify access and quality concerns

- Participatory research to bring multiple perspectives to interpret gaps

- Using results to inform a problem-solving dialogue

- Creating a remedial action plan with timelines and measures of change

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Algorithms

Negative practices

- Failure to think through intended and unintended outcomes

- Elevating algorithmic decision-making over judgment of seasoned practitioners

- Using algorithms to make punitive decisions

- Using algorithms with "dirty" data that reflect bias

- Amplifying perceptions of "threat" through "risk scores"

Positive Practices

- Algorithm planning involving diverse stakeholders (residents, parents, teachers, staff)

- Multiple agencies aligned on intent

- Drafting a public statement of purpose at the beginning

- Using algorithms to identify early warnings and provide supports

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Reporting & Dissemination

Negative practices

- Putting materials solely online, particularly behind a pay wall.

- Only using data for compliance reporting, rather than meaning-making

- Applying data intended to describe "whole population" to individuals

Positive Practices

- Making resources accessible both online and offline, as easy to read in a variety of formats

- Providing public access to aggregate data (e.g. dashboards, routine reports)

- Doing impact analysis

- Applying an equity lens to framing of results

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Summary

- Governance and process can create an inclusive effort that centers racial equity in problem definition, analysis, and action

- Stakeholder engagement should be held up as critical, essential and valued in all aspects of a problem assessment process

- Gaps in access to services, quality and outcomes should open a dialogue among citizens, providers and agency administrators

- Set action plans to start the cycle of change: Reflect, Learn, Act