Involving Students in Data Services

Friday morning 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.

NNIP Partners – both university based and independent nonprofit organizations – engage with students through internships, service learning, and volunteer opportunities. The experience of working with students can be mutually beneficial for the NNIP Partner and the students. It exposes emerging professionals to the work of a local data intermediary and supports research, training, and other activities of the organization. However, preparation is required, on the parts of the organization and of the student, to make these experiences productive.

The purpose of this session is to share lessons about working effectively with university students and discuss tips for recruiting, onboarding, and managing student work.

This session, and a May 2017 NNIP unconference session on working with students and volunteers, led by Seema Iyer (Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance) and Neal Humphries (Housing Insights), will inform NNIPHQ's development of a Guide to Working with Students for NNIP Partners.

John Killeen from Data Works NC will open the session with framing remarks and serve as moderator for the panel. Three NNIP Partners will offer brief presentations on their experiences in working with students: describing the types of projects students work on, and recruitment and onboarding strategies.

- *Ashley Williams Clark,* University of North Carolina at Charlotte
- *Cheryl Knott*, Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance
- *Mark Abraham*, DataHaven in New Haven

After a series of moderated questions, we will move to plenary discussion, and encourage Partners to share their perspective from their own experiences.

Discussion:

1. **Assessing organizational capacity and need:** Prior to working with students, NNIP Partners should assess their own organizational capacity to create an appropriate, productive, and mutually beneficial position for student workers.

   o Is it a good fit and time for your organization to engage students? Are there organizational needs that are well suited for student workers? Do you have staff with time to mentor and manage student workers?

2. **Getting started:** Organizations should identify channels to connect with and recruit interested students. Working to solidify relationships with university departments, faculty, or fellowship programs can help create a recurring pipeline of student workers. Partners need to be deliberate and thoughtful in their onboarding of student workers. Creating a process to establish expectations early can maximize benefits for the organization and students. NNIP Partners have developed and use a range of tools such as onboarding guides, workshops, intake assessments or primers to manage expectations and provide crucial background for students.

   o **Recruitment:** What strategies have Partners used to recruit students? Specifically, how can Partners housed outside universities create a pipeline for interested students?

   o **Onboarding:** What steps can Partners take at the outset of a student learning/working relationship to manage expectations and foster a mutually beneficial experience?

3. **Getting to work:** Organizations should set and manage expectations about the scope and quality of student work.

   o **Production:** How can you manage the quality of student-created products without staff diverting too much attention from their other responsibilities? How do Partners create meaningful learning experiences and set realistic goals?