# NNIP Tech Collaboration

Leader: Steven Saylor  
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Attendance: Dan Brown, Joe Baldwin, Shaohui Zhai, Rob Pitingolo (notes)

Steven: Let’s do some intros.

Dan: HI. I’m from Austin.

Shaohui: Looking to learn.

Joe: Interested in DCAN and what other people are using.

Steven: I am a software developer in Pittsburgh. I work with Bob. This idea came up because we are working on a new indicators platform. A lot of folks probably have similar problems that they need solving. I wanted to get an inventory of what people are working on and what good ideas they have had. One thing to get started. Documentation could be one place to start, all the way up to building a whole website. Has anyone ever done a collaboration on software before where efforts had to be shared? What were your takeaways?

Joe: I will give a shoutout to CI:Now. I’ve used their ACS tech. They have a nice tool there for doing ACS analysis. There is collaboration that is going on. I may have talked to you earlier about CCAN. Big shoutout to Pitt guys.

Steven: Our housing project. That’s a collaboration with CMU and a bunch of community partners to build the decision-making infrastructure.

Joe: There is an equitable distribution of work. An organization can’t invest 50K and just give it away.

Rob: Example of Furman Center iPums code. Could be used by other NNIP cities by just swapping the geography codes.

Steven: I think that way too when I write some code. Can you swap in another dataset or city code and someone else can use it?

Dan: I’m not the most technical guy but we had an idea to pull in data from various hospitals and then people could go to one website and get data for lots of different places. Seemed like a great idea but in the actual rollout ER doctors are busy and didn’t take the time to put in quality data. With one of the clinic systems they figured out a way to incorporate data into their own system. So they didn’t have to log into a second system. What was most useful was generating specific reports.

Joe: APIs are the way to go.

Steven: I’m curious about APIs. There is federal data we all deal with.

Joe: Are you pushing health data to the public Dan?

Dan: No. It’s private data.

Joe: What if it’s aggregated?

Dan: At the time I did the reports and worked on getting de-identified data.

Steve: I am a big believer in open data. Is there a way to make open data more accessible?

Rob: what about different open data portal techs?

Steven: That’s something I was thinking about. Maybe we find something about all those different things to plug in.

Joe: I’m definitely interested in getting something out to the people at a minimal cost. I don’t want to make money on it, I’m done with making money. I’m working on getting out there that’s simply in CSV. I don’t want it to be too complicated.

Shaouqhu: Is it secure?

Joe: I used a system based on TERRIA.js

Dan: How is a system like that monitored to make sure quality data is added?

Joe: Data stewards. You would give trusted people trusted privileges.

Dan: So there’s a gatekeeper who reviews each file?

Joe: Each data custodian is responsible for the data they upload. Right now I’m responsible. Eventually you will have a publisher group.

Steven: We have data stewards from publishers but some mixed feelings about privacy that we have had to stop them.

Joe: We come up with suppression rules but it’s ultimately arbitrary. Maybe we could do a small survey among NNIP to know what suppression rules are. These things come up often and there are some good papers on HIPAA and FIRPA that came out of integrated data systems.

Dan: We have a standard. We use less than 10 to suppress. It was in the literature somewhere. Can’t remember where.

Shaouqhu: We use 30 cut off for the denominator. So when you produce a rate it’s 5/30. If you are giving a proportion you want to use 30.

Joe: Coming up with arbitrary numbers each time is difficult.

Steven: We want people to be able to use the data to judge how the school system is doing but disaggregating is a challenge. Maybe my initial idea was too lofty. Perhaps some kind of HIPAA checker or data cleaning tool that could be interoperable between our different orgs? How can we keep this conversation going? I have office hours almost ever Friday if anyone wants to stop by and talk.

Joe: I haven’t looked to see if there is a list of tools on the NNIP site. There is definitely room to have a modular approach. Why are we all building ACS tools? Why not one?

Shaouqhu: I’m not an IT person but I like what I learned. A lot of times I have to search for aggregated data. If there is a way to continue.

Dan: We are looking forward to creating an exchange. It’s down the road quite a bit.

Joe: Tech people are busy.

Rob: The tech people don’t necessarily participate in NNIP. Their boss needs to encourage them.

Steven: We need more people like me to participate and not just the Bobs of the world. Maybe we could have a separate NNIP tech working group.

Joe: I think that’s an excellent point. It would be nice to have a conversation at different levels. I’m kind of a generalist. I know a little about many things.

Joe: Charter is good for small groups. What is a way to address it? It’s good to have the perspective.

Steven: You could do a low barrier to entry thing like a slack channel but I get sick of those so I might not pay too much attention. If funding was available that would help too. Some kind of cross-site opportunity.

Dan: We only have a shot at doing this because of foundation funding.

Steven: Even if it’s just an hour, multiple by everyone involved, it adds up.