**Existing as a Local Data Intermediary Among Other Organizations**

Leader: John Cruz

Notes: Rob Pitingolo

Attendance: Cruz, Martin, Doughterty, Long, Ferriman, Abraham, Galvan, Bellows, Cowan, Raleigh, Hendey, Pyne, Ross, Adhikari, Austensen, Smith (geoff), Knott, Confair, Carter, Linn, Farooq, Simmons, Whitemore

Cruz: What’s the lay of the land in your metro? How do things look?

Ferriman: At our data event we were approaching it from the standpoint of lots of data sources but nobody knows who has what. Our first step is to create a list of people working with data, who has what, and if you need info, I’m the person to talk to.

Cruz: We want to start a spreadsheet to keep track of who has what and where to get it. What else have people seen?

Martin: Defining the domain. Our workforce agency is doing something like this already. It’s like econ and workforce data which overlaps with us, but we do things they wouldn’t.

Carter: That’s overwhelming.

Cruz: It can be.

Carter: Having worked on an ecosystem map - there’s just so many people, so many venn diagrams.

Raleigh: We have the same issue. Lots of people doing similar stuff. Lots of energy but also a lot of redundancy. It’s one of my pet peeves. I’ve built a network map. I’ve opened it up to a lot of people. We started expanding fields available. So it’s a profile for each node, then a connection to each project. It’s still new.

Cruz: It’s important to know who is working on stuff.

Raleigh: It got huge and out of control. When someone new comes in and wants to start doing something, I send them to the list so they can see who is already doing everything. They actually tend to appreciate it.

Cruz: Interesting.

Doughtry: Is this available for anyone?

Raleigh: Yes, if you have the url. I will share it with this group. [Edit: here it is- <https://kumu.io/ericaraleigh/pub-ntwk> ]

Cruz: Anyone else do anything similar?

Hendey: You need a group like April’s NERDs.

Cruz: Maybe it’s just once per year. Is that realistic? Maybe there’s a better way.

Martin: There’s a list for cities and counties, we subscribe to it. Lots of random users subscribe. The nonprofits aren’t going to use that. It’s a domain question. People doing housing affordability might not use it, transportation people might.

Galvan: We have people who might come to something like that. We have different definitions of using data. There are silos. I don’t care about agency data. Those people will show up and say they have data.

Cruz: We are seeing people trying to consolidate data from people who don’t talk to each other. More and more we see a wider lens. If it means everything it means nothing. How do we get these people talking together? There was an insane idea where anyone with data writes and API to pull it into one giant system. I don’t think we need to hit that point.

Raleigh: That group has been in Michigan. They have scripts to pull from every open data portal in the country then went bankrupt (poseba?).

Cruz: even if you could pull it off, who pays? How do you sustain it?

Galvan: the cost difference between hospital people and crime people is more expensive than doing it at a neighborhood level. That’s a piece of it that’s just not going to happen. The cost is just so high.

Ross: kitchen sink approach we always find doesn’t work.

Cruz: If you can connect it, how do you make it something anyone wants to use?

Ross: what drove me crazy is that government can only produce data and they spend resources on end user apps. It’s better to split that up. Code 4 American is good for spurts but not the long haul. NNIP is long game. It can be complementary.

Carter: We didn’t know that when we started working with them.

Hendey: I like grouping on what are you strengths. There are more orgs who work on the same issues but they play a different role.

Cruz: there can be guilt of association.

Martin: We are hoping to work with a group from an earlier stage in the process next time to help give them context for what to work on and interpret tools. They made a big deal out of it and a lot were volunteers are public officials. Just because you’re showing it in an app doesn’t make it better.

Raleigh: In our system everyone can see the data and develop their own front end system and tell their own story through their lens.

Martin: We produce population estimates that different from the Census. We say ours are right because we look at more local sets of info. They use a model and not use local data. Even with ACS data it depends if you’re using the 1-year or 5-year. It’s impossible to avoid the 1 number.

Galvan: What do you do in decennial years?

Martin: It’s all benchmarked to decennial.

Cruz: We have to take on role of data consultants.

Ferriman: People don’t want to be told they’re asking the wrong question.

Carter: I think the approach is that you ask what question they are trying to ask. It’s a helpful question. It helps focus.

Ferriman: It leads to to what you’re trying to do can’t be answered. Sometimes you can head it off early.

Carter: The question that follows from that is about data exists but now what to do. You have to decide if you have capacity to deal with questions. People used to not be open to crowd sourcing but now people are much more open to it.

Ross: You can spur innovation to do work. There were a lot of people in Nola collecting data but we didn’t think it would meet our standards. If a tools is stupid people won’t use it. Sometimes apps need to come and die.

Cruz: We build lots of good portals that no one uses. If it fails it might not be because it’s bad.

Ross: Users doing high-end work won’t let a tool die.

Ferriman: Do user surveys. Find out how they are using it and what’s the end result.

Cruz: If you scrape data and add value to it. Can you license it?

Ferriman: If you’re putting data out there you assume someone is doing something with it. It’s nice if they could acknowledge it but also just be happy it’s being used at all.

Cruz: Can we use data days?

Ferriman: Ours is built around training. You’ve got networking built in. You can learn who else is out there and working on what. You have a better sense in the end about who and what else is out there. This year we talked about having a framework outside the meeting. We all agreed that what’s reasonable as a first step is a directory.

Cruz: Who does data days?

Linn: We did a big data days 3 years ago. We put a lot of effort into scanning the field and organizing the data day around common pain points. We haven’t been able to do it again since then. What size and scope of a convening has worked?

Simmons: We started small then ramped up. Then we lost capacity so went back in the other direction and did small workshops. We could maybe do it more frequently.

Knott: We did our 8th data day in July. About 300 people come. We structured it in a particular way. The main event has topical sessions and at each session there is a moderator and presentation from a data provider. Followed up by a presentation by a researcher. Someone who does a deep dive. Then a 3rd presentation by a resident or non profit working in the community. For our outreach we send an initial email blast. We’ve had great turnout and presentations. We feel it’s sustainable. It’s a free event and get some funding from foundations and banks. It’s been a good model. We’ve opened it up for opportunities to hear from other organizations. We wanted to recognize that people do deep dives into specific topics. It’s been working well.

Cruz: How much does it cost?

Knott: Under 10k. We have tried to do AV and it costs way more. We have breakfast, box lunches for 300 people. Printing costs.

Ferriman: We charged for attendance for the 1st time this year. Otherwise people sign up and don’t show. If they have to pay a small amount they are more likely to show.

Hendey: Hard to do with residents are the audience.

Galvan: My company might pay 20 bucks but I might not.

Cruz: Randos will email me and runs a tailor shop and he is the only way to do crime data. He’s not an organization, just some eccentric old dude who does this in his spare time. This is the kind of people who don’t have their finger on the pulse but need to be included.

Ross: These are the people who file all those public record requests. You can step in as a data intermediary.

Cruz: any closing thoughts before we go?

Hendey: Anyone collaborated well with a similar org?

Galvan: we worked with an education group. We’ve accepted some of their definitions and report their way.

Carter: We’re negotiating. We’re going to use tableau visualizations and want to post it on multiple websites. One of them has a funny definition of liveable income.

Long: We have a relationship with the wisconsin public radio. We’re not so good at marketing research so it’s a win-win.

Abraham: we’ve branched out to all the cities in CT so we made a spreadsheet with all of the data and user needs.

Carter: Raises a new issue which is archiving data and what to do with data when the grant runs out.

Cruz: OK, thanks everybody.

[End of session]