

COMMUNITY DATA AND TECHNOLOGY TRAINING FIELD SURVEY

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In Spring 2016, the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP) and Microsoft's Civic Technology Engagement Group launched a project to explore and expand community training on data and technology for government and nonprofit staff members. The project included a survey of NNIP partners and other organizations on how they provide in-person training on data and technology for audiences who work professionally or personally to serve the community and improve neighborhood conditions. The survey provided information from 32 respondents on 54 trainings.

The tables below summarize the trainings' goals, audiences, and delivery method. Overall, these trainings illustrated the wide range of training offered to improve literacy in data and technology across the country.

TRAINING GOALS

The variety of training purposes represented in the responses demonstrated how organizations are meeting the local need for increased understanding and capability around data analytics and technologies in governments and nonprofits. Most often, trainings sought to achieve multiple goals to simultaneously address various aspects of data and technology literacy.

Goal of the training	Number of trainings
Use data and technology to complete a work-related task (e.g., gather indicators to support a grant application)	25
Use a local data website (e.g., an NNIP partner's or city's open data site) to obtain data.	24
Use a technology tool (e.g., GIS, Excel, Tableau) to manipulate or visualize data	21
Understand basic data concepts (e.g., median versus average, margin of error)	15
Use data related to specific issue areas (e.g., housing, environment)	14
Use a specific data source (e.g., American Community Survey, local crime data)	13
Collect primary data (e.g., conduct a property conditions survey)	8
Manipulate data and calculate statistics (e.g., create indicators or calculate statistical significance)	6

Notes: GIS = geographic information system. Trainings may have multiple goals.

TRAINING AUDIENCES

Although some trainers offered targeted sessions, most respondents included a mix of actors in their courses, including nonprofit and government staff and leaders, funders, and unaffiliated community members. For a few, the training was a natural progression from a preexisting community partnership growing out of a previous grant or addressing a need with a current partner organization. Of the 54 trainings, nonprofit staff and leaders were the most common audience, followed by government entities. Other audiences included journalists, librarians, and nonprofit grant writers.

Training Audiences	Number of trainings
Nonprofit staff and leaders	42
Government staff	32
Funders	19
Government elected officials	6
University students and staff	2
Other	9

Note: Trainings may address multiple audiences.

TRAINING DELIVERY METHODS

Most trainers chose live demonstrations and presentations to teach their participants data and technology skills, and found in-class exercises and small-group discussions helpful. Many respondents noted a mix of activities, relying on several approaches for each class.

Training Delivery Methods	Number of respondents
Live demonstrations	24
Presentation slides	19
Guided in-class exercise	18
Small-group discussion	13

Note: Respondents could choose multiple delivery methods.

TRAINING GAPS

Although the survey showed many trainings being offered, the survey results highlighted the demand for additional training opportunities. The survey asked people to identify the trainings for which they saw a need in their community. One respondent noted, “We’ve found that [the need] for capacity building is huge for our nonprofits. Even if they understand that data are needed to measure progress, we’re cultivating a culture of curiosity so [they can see that] the return is worth the investment. Nonprofits seem to see data efforts as taking time and resources away from direct programming.”

Goal of the training	Number identifying a gap
Understand basic data concepts (e.g., median versus average, margin of error)	23
Use a technology tool (e.g., GIS, Excel, Tableau) to manipulate or visualize data	21
Collect primary data (e.g., conduct a property conditions survey)	21
Use data related to specific issue areas (e.g., housing, environment)	21
Use data and technology to complete a work-related task (e.g., gather indicators to support a grant application)	17
Use a local data website (e.g., an NNIP partner’s or city’s open data site) to obtain data.	15
Manipulate data and calculate statistics (e.g., create indicators or calculate statistical significance)	14
Use a specific data source (e.g., American Community Survey, local crime data)	13

Note: Respondents could select multiple categories to identify training needs.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership and Microsoft’s joint project on *Expanding Training on Using Data and Technology to Improve Communities* used their on-the-ground connections to quickly scan the landscape of training across the country via a survey in summer 2016. Twenty-seven NNIP partners and five external organizations, including MIT’s Media Lab, the City of Chicago, the US Department of Commerce, the Chicago branch of Microsoft’s Civic Technology Engagement Group, and the Nonprofit Technology Network participated. Respondents were asked to describe up to three trainings. Four survey respondents, all of them NNIP partners, did not conduct training. The survey results and other insights from the field were synthesized into the brief and guide described below.

Resources from the Community Data and Technology Training Project

- *Project page*: A hub with links to all the project resources at <http://www.neighborhoodindicators.org/training>.
- *Brief*: A summary of the current training landscape and key action steps for various sectors to ensure that local government and nonprofit staff have the data and technology skills needed for their civic missions.
- *Guide*: A document for organizations interested in providing community data and technology training, including advice on how to assess local needs, develop training content, and fund these efforts.
- *Catalog*: Example training descriptions and related materials collected from various cities for local adaptation.



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