

NNIP 2019 Partner Survey Findings

We <3 NNIP and appreciate all of the hard work that the Urban team puts into making it such a great network.

In Summer 2019, NNIP conducted a survey of its members to assess how well the peer learning network is serving its members over the period from 2018-2019. The NNIP Executive Committee and Urban Institute staff will use the findings to shape network plans for 2020-2022 and to report to current and potential funders. The survey results shed light on how well NNIP is performing on its stated goals to strengthen the capacity of local organizations to develop and facilitate the use of data and learn about innovative methods and practices from one another and outside experts.

The survey was sent to 189 staff members of NNIP partner organizations; 74 respondents answered at least part of the survey. Demographics about the respondents can be found at the end of this document.

Highlighted Findings

- More than 90% of respondents noted that the meetings were important to their organization and almost all said that NNIP does a good job at hosting the meetings.
- Many respondents identified a need to boost new and junior staff participation and highlighted suggestions, such as creating a junior staff cohort or scholarships for new and junior staff to attend Partner meetings.
- Respondents also suggested creating subgroups within the network—based on organization type, staff type, or areas of interest—to create space for more focused conversations.
- Funding came up several times with requests for NNIP HQ to fund scholarships to attend meetings, coordinate fundraising across the network, and fundraise for more cross-site projects.
- Equitable development/gentrification/displacement and housing/housing affordability were the most noted as pressing issues in the community over the next three years.

Partner Meetings

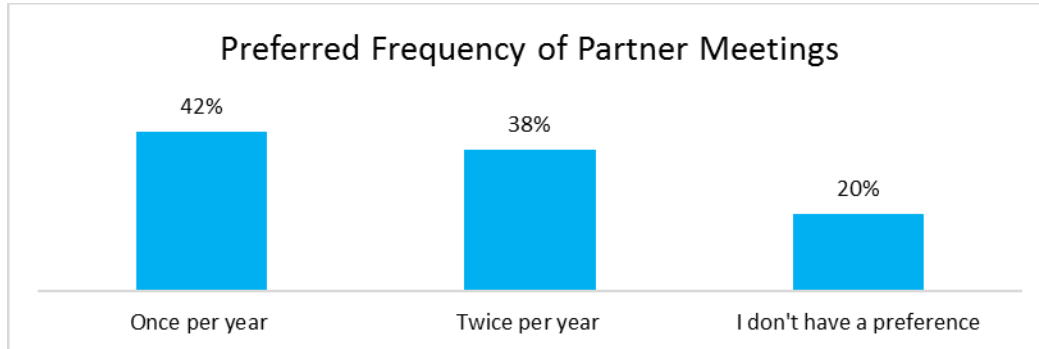
Satisfaction with Partner meetings

Partner meetings are well liked. 92% of respondents said the Partner meetings were important to their organization and 97% said that NNIP does a good job at hosting the meetings.

Attendance

Individuals who have been at their organization 4 or more years were more likely to attend the Partner meetings than newer staff. The top reason people reported not attending the meetings was because someone else from their organization attends (40%, 8 out of 20 respondents). It appears that new and junior staff are less able to attend the Partner meetings, due to budgetary constraints and established staff being more likely to be sent. Other reasons people don't attend include no travel funds (15%, 3 respondents), not enough time (15%, 3 respondents), and family considerations (10%, 2 respondents).

Twenty percent of respondents don't have a preference on whether NNIP has one or two partner meetings a year. The remaining respondents were about evenly split whether they wanted one or two. Two respondents noted that while they would like two meetings a year, they didn't think they had the ability to pay to attend two meetings a year.



Recommendations to boost participation in the Partner meetings

The cost of attending the Partner meetings was the main concern, as well as organizations supporting junior staff to get involved.

Respondents suggested:

- NNIP HQ team seek sponsorship from organizations to subsidize cost of attending the meetings.
- NNIP HQ team fund stipends or scholarships for first-time attendees or junior staff for conferences.
- The network ensure partner organizations understand the importance of all staff being able to participate, not just the leadership and senior staff.
- NNIP HQ team increase opportunities for Partners to participate remotely during meetings.

Other Network Participation

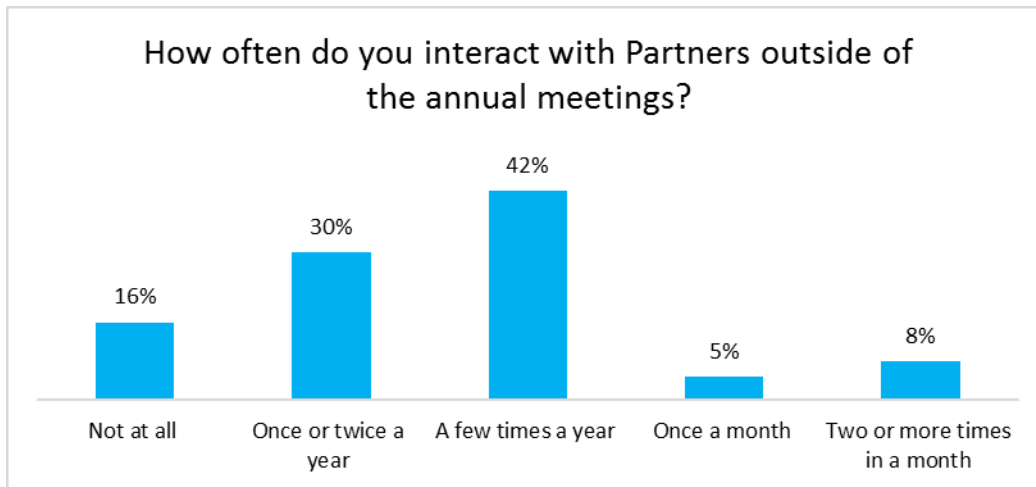
Participation

Almost all survey respondents participate in the network outside of the Partner meetings as well. Of the 5 responses who said they did not participate, 4 noted that they didn't know how. Most respondents interact with other partners outside of the Partner meetings (84%). Of those who do not interact with partners outside of meetings, 90% have been in the network for less than 3 years. We recognize that staff who responded to the survey are the ones more likely to be network participants.

The biggest barriers to participation are funding and time. At least half of respondents participate outside of meetings in the following ways:

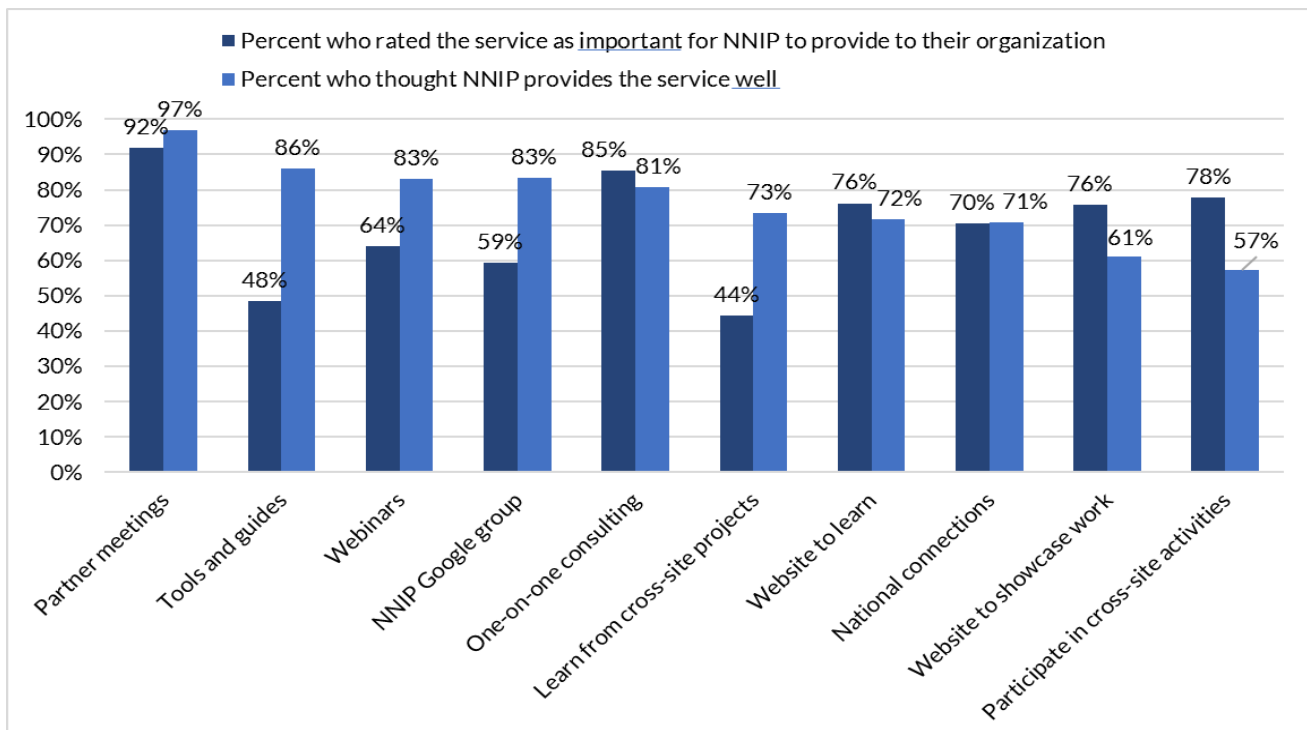
- Reading or contributing to the NNIP google groups (72%)
- Attending webinars or partner meetings remotely (62%)
- Communicating with staff at other partner organizations in between meetings (61%)
- Entering something on or using the NNIP website (55%)
- Presenting at meetings, webinars etc. (50%)

85% of respondents interact with Partners outside of the annual meetings. 9 out of 10 of those who do not, have been a part of the network less than 3 years.



Importance of NNIP Services and Quality of Delivery

Most activities were rated very highly in importance to NNIP Partners and quality of delivery. Activities that were less often noted as important were the website to showcase work, webinars, and participation in cross-site projects. The two activities that participants thought NNIP needed to work the most on were 1) using the website to showcase work and 2) opportunities to learn from cross site projects (12% of responses scored a 1 or 2 for these options).



How to Boost Participation in the Network and Suggested Activities?

To boost participation, respondents suggested changing the communications channels, creating subgroups within the partnership to hold more focused conversations, supporting new and junior staff to become a larger part of the network, and increasing connections between sites that do similar work. Additionally, there were a few services NNIP already delivers that were requested, and so NNIP HQ needs to consider how to promote these services differently.

One respondent said: “More than anything, though, I think we should get really clear about **why** we want participation, other than for its own sake, and for each “why”, whose participation is most important. The strategies for getting participation for joint learning are almost certainly different from those for getting participation in impact/steward award applications, filling out surveys, etc.”

Below are more details on the suggestions.

- **Vary or improve communication channels, potentially creating smaller groups**
 - “I like reading the google group but I always hesitate to contribute and prefer to reach out to people I know individually”
 - Switch from Google group to Slack or Microsoft Teams
 - Small group conference calls organized around a particular topic
 - Experiment with tracks in camp sessions for smaller groups
 - Subgrouping suggestions:
 - Roles: organizational management; statistical analysis / mapping; web development; community engagement; R user group; resource development and business management
 - Type of home organization: academic, government, and non-profit partners
- **Improve webinars**
 - “would be good to think more about how to structure the webinars for more active engagement by participants. These Data Literacy Consortium webinars do a good job of connecting people online. <http://dataconsortium.net/>” (one person said to discontinue Webinars but not a Key Staff, 1—3 years in the network)
- **Bolster new and junior staff participation and support**
 - Onboard new staff to the network
 - Build a peer cohort of junior staff in different cities
- **Connect sites that are doing similar things and promote more cross-site projects**
 - “I’ve been curious as to how cross site projects get established.”
 - Structured working committees or affinity groups-- connecting people based on needs that they could work collaboratively on
 - Build more cross-site projects to fundraise for the network and for the partners’ work.
 - Cross-site work. It doesn’t necessarily need to be funded cross-site projects but more collaboration across partners

- **Partner organizational support**
 - Share information on tools for internal data management
 - Strategies for finding consultants for projects that require skills outside of staff capacity. One respondent suggested creating an NNIP Version of Fiver—the opportunity to contract with other staff in the network for small, specific jobs.
 - “I have often wondered whether it would provide scale efficiencies for NNIP to have a centralized data service of some sort that could be syndicated to each of the partners and adapted to their local context. It could even be the development and maintenance of R packages, perhaps as a collective project of NNIP members. My guess is that there is a lot of duplication of effort, e.g., in making the same ACS tables in different ways for different locations.”
 - Create collective literature reviews on relevant topics
 - “A continued and expanded focus on business model development, strategy, and sustainability will be critical going forward. The "local data" space is becoming increasingly crowded and competitive.”
- **Funding**
 - Coordinate fundraising efforts across sites
 - Helping to find and secure supplemental funding for under-performing centers
- **Elevate the importance and impact of the work nationally**
 - Urban to continue to highlight the work done locally
 - Develop a brief about why local communities should value and invest in local expertise rather than large national think tanks.
 - Collect case studies or anonymized mini-stories of why a local community switched from national to local help and the payoff

Feedback on information to share or things we are already doing that needs to be promoted more

- Process for Urban to get new staff on the email list
- Share how Partners can organize sessions
- Video content that highlights what works and what doesn't
- Having increased occasional national references to the work partner organizations do locally, and relevant examples from other cities could be helpful.
- Notations on website profiles that note staff specialties
- Public and partner newsletter

Motivations

What personally motivates you in your work?

- **Help solve problems in the community, many live in the communities that they are trying to impact**
 - Work on and highlight issues that are important to me
 - Build connections with residents, other organizations, and community actors
- **Improve circumstances for community members by addressing structural issues around equity:**
 - More specifically, respondents spoke to: increase equity and power to people who lack it; reduce the impact of structural racism and poverty; advance equitable development; Help residents build better lives
 - Tell the systemic story of challenges in a neighborhood
 - Driving community change efforts, community empowerment, and centering the concerns and input of historically marginalized members of the community.
- **Create a common baseline of understanding around the facts of an issue**
 - *"I am passionate about truth telling with data."*
- **Leverage data for more informed policy decisions and program design**
 - *Like to use/leverage my skills, the intellectual challenge, and put academic work to good use*
 - *"I think that informed stakeholders and a common understanding of facts can create faster, more effective, and more equitable social change"*
 - Helping nonprofit organizations make better decisions, understand their impact, tell their stories, and compete with larger businesses
 - *"I believe that technology has a role to play in transforming government and how we make collective decisions. I am driven to not only help make that transformation a reality, but also more equitable."*
- **Democratizing data, improving access to data for those who don't have access to it.**
 - "Data is a great equalizer."
 - Building and offering data capacity in the community--both through training others and providing data analysis, research, and information

Future Network Considerations

Topical Focus Areas for NNIP for the Next 3 Years

Respondents most commonly said housing/housing affordability and equitable development. Gentrification, and displacement were the most pressing issues facing their community. Other highlighted:

- (17) Housing; Housing Affordability
- (16) Equitable development; Gentrification; Displacement
- (7) Poverty, Economic Inequity
- (7) Climate resilience, emergency management
- (7) Social Determinants of Health; Access to Health Services; Mental Health; Affordability
- (6) Racial equity/disparities; Addressing white supremacy/structural racism; segregation
 - Immigration Policies and impact on communities
- (6) Transportation; Transit Access; infrastructure
- (4) Workforce Development/Availability of Jobs; Labor Force Shifts
- (3) Homelessness
- (2) Food Accessibility/Food Deserts
- (3) Safety and Justice
 - Criminal justice reform
 - Safety-outside of crime
 - Gun Violence
- Systems Change
 - (2) Intersectionality of Issues
 - Two-generation/collective impact strategies
 - Systems change
 - (2) National and Other Policy Shifts
 - Linking NNIP local perspective/work with leading national research in a systematic way and integrating a more explicit account of causality and statistical uncertainty into our approaches.
- "The effect of charter and private schools receiving public dollars- I'd love to see a cross-site project on this."
- **General Data and Technology Topics**
 - Integrated Data Systems with administrative data
 - the issue of disclosure avoidance related to ACS and decennial data has huge implications for NNIP partners for policymaking.
 - Equitable use of demographic data (e.g. sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status)
 - Reducing redundancy around data work
 - Open source data software (e.g. Github)
 - Equity of new technologies
 - "Government as Platform" <https://www.platformland.org/>

- **Partner Organization Considerations**

- Helping partners provide useful analysis, and not just make data available
- How to promote and elevate findings and projects
 - Dissemination of Findings "We keep coming face-to-face with the reality that emotions are as much or more important to opening/changing people's minds. What are tools and strategies to connect with people emotionally without sacrificing neutrality?"
 - more inspirational data visualizations
- "The viability of local data intermediaries amid the shifting priorities/landscape of funders."
- Local collaboration around data, reducing barriers
- Leadership
- Partner funding

Relationships between Partners and national organizations:

In response to the question, "Which specific relationships with national organizations, if any, are most helpful or important to your work?", NNIP Partners predominately noted connections with national funders (20 out of 28 responses), with Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Annie E. Casey Foundation the main funders noted (7 and 5 mentions respectively). Other categories of important connections included 40% involved with Federal Agencies (mainly the census and the Federal Reserve), and 29% involved in national networks (mostly All In).

Other Organizations NNIP Should be Connecting to:

Respondents suggested the following organizations that NNIP should connect with:

- National Funders: Knight, Luminate; FabRiders; Aspiration; Ford Foundation
- "Policy Labs" (funded by groups like Arnold Ventures)
- Groups working on data privacy and surveillance
- EFF, Future of Privacy Forum, ACLU,
- Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy (AISP)
- Institute of Library and Museum Services
- Bloomberg Associates
- "The Opportunity Project"
- American Planning Association
- Urban and Regional Information Systems Association (URISA)
- Community Campus Partnerships for Health
- Human Impact Partners
- Southern Demographic Association
- National LGBTQ Task Force
- National Civic League
- State CDO network, NYU GovLab
- Mayors
- Governors

Suggested Other Cities to Outreach to:

- Newark, NJ;
Tulsa OK, Jersey City (Health Dept), Bloomington IL (regional data initiative), Syracuse NY,
- stronger Southwest presence (Phoenix, Las Vegas, San Diego).
- More West coast partners
- Tulsa and Oklahoma City could lend themselves well to some NNIP outreach

Everything is awesome!

Respondent Demographics

The majority of respondents had been in the network 1–6 years.

Less than 1	7	9%
1-3	35	47%
4-6	16	22%
8-10	5	7%
More than 10	11	15%
Grand Total	74	100%

Most respondents were from universities and research centers, followed by nonprofits.

Row Labels	Count of Org Type	Percent of Org Type
University/research center	39	53%
Nonprofit	16	22%
Community/local funders	11	15%
Other	8	11%
Grand Total	74	100%