

Central Ohio Co-Partners in the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership

NNIP Application by:

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission

The Ohio State University Center for Urban & Regional Analysis

February 2022

CONTENTS

CONTENTS..... 2

COVER LETTERS 3

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION (MORPC) 3

ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION AND ACTIVITIES (MORPC)..... 5

SELECTED PROJECTS (MORPC) 10

FUTURE PLANS AND SUSTAINABILITY (MORPC) 12

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION (CURA) 13

ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION AND ACTIVITIES (CURA) 15

SELECTED PROJECTS (CURA) 19

FUTURE PLANS AND SUSTAINABILITY (CURA) 21

LOCAL ENVIRONMENT FOR COMMUNITY INFORMATION 22

PARTNERSHIP DETAIL 25

POTENTIAL RELATIONSHIP TO NNIP 25

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS FOR APPLICANTS IN CITIES THAT WERE FORMERLY IN THE NNIP NETWORK 27

REFERENCES..... 29

APPENDIX – STAFF AND BOARD DIVERSITY 31

APPENDIX – COVER LETTER (MORPC) 35

APPENDIX – COVER LETTER (CURA)..... 36

COVER LETTERS

Cover letters for each of the co-applicants are included in the appendices.

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION (MORPC)

Applicant organization name: Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC)

Organization website: <https://www.morpc.org/>

Primary contact person for NNIP: Dave Dixon, Director of Data Analytics & Strategy (614) 233-4147 | ddixon@morpc.org

Organization structure (e.g., university, nonprofit):

MORPC is both a 501(C)3 nonprofit organization and a unit of local government in Ohio as a regional planning commission. MORPC is also appointed as the federally mandated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Columbus area.

MORPC's Planning Department and Data & Geospatial Analysis team has an ongoing relationship with OSU's Center for Urban & Regional Analysis (CURA), our co-applicant. For the past several years, MORPC's Data & Geospatial Analysis Team and CURA have worked closely to align and support one another's efforts. These teams have aligned emphasis on improving access to and the use of data to inform decision-making, as well as strong technical skillsets in data analyses, mapping, and visualization. In addition to partnering on project work, MORPC holds a seat on the CURA Advisory Board, a CURA staff person was recently appointed chair of MORPC's Regional Information and Data Group, and a CURA staff person was recently appointed as a member of MORPC's Regional Data Advisory Committee. If successful, the joint application to represent Central Ohio in NNIP would reinforce this partnership.

Current and planned geographic area of focus:

MORPC serves 15 counties in the Central Ohio region, Delaware, Fairfield, Fayette, Franklin, Hocking, Knox, Licking, Logan, Madison, Marion, Morrow, Perry, Pickaway, Ross, and Union. Our data work sometimes relates broadly to the entire region, but often involves more granular analysis depending on the goals of the initiative, project, or request at hand.

The geography of our work is often driven by subdivided roles of the agency. At its broadest, the Central Ohio region is defined as the full 15-county MORPC area of interest, and our 70+ local government members extend across the entire region. Additionally, MORPC serves the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) area, as well as the newly formed Central Ohio Regional Planning Organization (CORPO) area in our transportation planning work (see [MORPC's member map](#) for details). At times, the region will be defined in other ways, such as the 10-county metropolitan statistical area, or Franklin and its contiguous counties. Regardless of which version of the Central Ohio region is used for a given project or initiative, this just sets the extent of the work. In most cases, MORPC's work includes geographically granular demographic analysis and modeling of Central Ohio.

Current staffing:

Number of staff or full-time equivalents (FTEs) working in the organization:

Number of staff or FTEs working on local data intermediary:

List of key staff members engaged in those activities along with a sentence describing their roles:

MORPC has about 80 staff depending on vacant positions.

MORPC's Data and Geospatial Analytics team is heavily involved in local data intermediary activities in the agency and includes 11 full-time equivalent positions. Due to internal restructuring and planned

investment in our data and research capacity, it is anticipated that another two positions could be added to the Data and Geospatial Analysis team in the mid-term.

Key staff:

The Data & Geospatial Analytics section is part of MORPC's Planning department, led by **Dr. Kerstin Carr**, Chief Regional Strategy Officer and Senior Director of Planning. She has over 20 years of experience in transportation and urban planning and has led many large-scale regional planning initiatives that rely heavily on data and mapping techniques.

The Data & Geospatial Analysis section is led by **Dave Dixon**, Director of Data Analytics & Strategy, who establishes and guides the agency's priorities and strategy as a data leader in Central Ohio by leading MORPC's Regional Data Advisory Committee and Regional Data Agenda, overseeing work of the Data & Geospatial Analytics section, developing new projects and initiatives to serve Central Ohio communities, and building new partnerships.

As the Associate Director of Geospatial Analysis, **Cheri Mansperger** coordinates the agency enterprise GIS system and maintenance of various regional datasets, including facilitating the maintenance of address point, road centerline, and alternative transportation infrastructure data among multiple cities in Franklin County. She leads the Central Ohio GIS Users Group and has been working with GIS for over 30 years.

The Data & Research Office, **Adam Porr**, focuses on using data to understand the demographic, social, and economic factors that drive change and influence planning and policy decisions in the region. This position leads the data team in developing knowledge of data, tools, and skills to apply across the data life cycle, from procurement to production. The Data & Research Officer also supervises facilitation of MORPC's recently formed Regional Information and Data Group.

List of board or advisory board members and affiliations:

MORPC board of commissioners is comprised of over 100 representatives appointed by our member jurisdictions or affiliate organizations. A smaller subset of the board of commissioners called the Executive Committee, acts as MORPC's board of directors. Our current board is led by:

Karen J. Angelou, City of Gahanna | Board Chair
Erik J. Janas, Franklin County | Vice Chair
Chris Amorose Groomes, City of Dublin | Secretary

A full list of commission members and detailed information about the roles and functions of MORPC's board of commissioners can be found [on our website](#).

The Regional Data Advisory Committee (RDAC) is one of MORPC's top-level advisory committees, consisting of data experts from the public, private, nonprofit, and academic sectors. RDAC's vision is to make Central Ohio a leader in using data to improve the quality of life for all residents. RDAC establishes and updates regional data priorities through a [Regional Data Agenda](#). The committee plays a key role in guiding the work of MORPC's data and geospatial analysis staff and serves as a direct channel of communication to the board of commissioners.

ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION AND ACTIVITIES (MORPC)

Overall organizational mission and brief history:

MORPC is a voluntary association of Central Ohio governments and regional organizations that envisions and embraces innovative directions in transportation, energy, housing, land use, the environment and economic prosperity. Our membership is representative of the rural, urban, and suburban communities that comprise MORPC's burgeoning region. In addition, MORPC's transformative programming and innovative public policy are evident throughout the 15 counties MORPC serves.

We take pride in bringing communities of all sizes and interests together to collaborate on best practices and plan for the future of our growing region. MORPC does this through a variety of programs, services, projects, and initiatives – all with the goal of improving the lives of our residents and making Central Ohio stand out on the world stage.

MORPC's history dates to 1943 when it was first formed as the Franklin County Planning Commission. In 1969, its area was expanded resulting in the creation of MORPC. Over time, MORPC has grown to reflect

an expanded membership of more than 70 members. Our membership includes both local governments and affiliate organizations (e.g., Columbus Metropolitan Library, Educational Services Center of Central Ohio, Solid Waste Authority of Central Ohio) representing a range of specialized public service interests.

Overview of the current activities and services of your organization that are related to NNIP functions, including the assembly, and sharing of neighborhood-level data:

MORPC's data and mapping work currently serves three primary functions. Local data intermediary functions, like assembly, analysis, and sharing of neighborhood-level data, are woven across them.

First, we support our core work of the agency as the regional council and MPO for the Central Ohio region. This work includes collaboration with local government staff in the collection of local data (e.g., transportation infrastructure and operations, building permits, address points, development activity, sustainability metrics, energy usage) and the development of regional datasets with standardized schemas.

Data generated by our analyses are also a product of this core work and are often at a geographically granular level. For instance, small area [estimates and forecasts](#) of population, employment, housing, and workforce are developed for a substantial portion of the region every four years. While the impetus for these products is the need to model future demand in our transportation system, we recognize and leverage the value of this data beyond its primary use. As a result, the local data across a range of topics are made accessible so they can be used within the agency and by our external partners for a range of neighborhood-level analyses.

Second, we provide services to members through individual member requests, technical assistance, and data and mapping support for larger projects and initiatives. These services can range widely in scope due to the diversity of members and partners we work with and serve. Many of our smaller member governments, as well as partner organizations and community groups, have limited staff and capacity and are able to leverage our staff's expertise and skills to produce maps or charts about their communities, or understand and access data resources that support their work. Other members have larger staff with more technical expertise, which can lead to more sophisticated support developing analysis methods, automated processes, or planning and implementation decision-making tools.

Our members also direct us to broad regional projects and initiatives. These efforts address some of the shared needs and goals of our diverse members, and, while typically regional in scope, often include neighborhood-level data and analysis. Foundational to these broad initiatives, MORPC convenes partners and community members, at the grassroots, grass tops, and organizational levels,

We also have strong support to drive these initiatives from partners in the social sector, like [The Columbus Foundation](#), [United Way of Central Ohio](#), and the [Human Service Chamber of Franklin County](#), as well as the business community, via organizations like [One Columbus](#), and [The Columbus Partnership](#).

Third, we provide data and tools to the public through our [Mid-Ohio Open Data \(M.O.O.D.\)](#) site and other project-specific resource hubs. M.O.O.D. includes MORPC-maintained regional datasets, data produced by analysis in our core work, and easy to access web applications as self-service tools for frequently requested data. We promote a federated approach to data sharing among communities in Central Ohio, not necessarily a "one-stop-shop" for all data. The intent of this approach is improved connections, discoverability, and ease of access to the wealth of data resources in the community, while respecting agencies' independence to manage their own data resources and avoiding duplication of effort. We also develop resource hubs centered around projects and initiatives.

An emerging role, the data and geospatial analysis team conducted a feasibility study to explore the demand and opportunities to expand our work in practical community research. This expanded research role would create new opportunities to initiate research and connect data and insights to stakeholders across Central Ohio. This new function would expand the production of neighborhood level analysis and data, while strengthening connections to other data producers in the region.

Local data intermediary services alignment with organizational mission:

Local data intermediary services are born from our agency's mission and integral to the work of the Data and Geospatial Analysis team. While our focus is regional, we collect, maintain, analyze, and provision data at granular levels to magnify the impact and value of our work. One lodestar of our work is service to members, which makes the need for granular data imperative. Whether providing a member with information about their community's demographics, employment, or future growth to support their communication, planning, or decision making, or building a regional analysis to make location specific decisions around funding priorities, neighborhood-level NNIP functions are embedded in our work.

Furthermore, MORPC's reputation and relationships in Central Ohio position us as one of the most trusted local data intermediaries in the region. MORPC does not itself have elected officials or statutory authority. As such, our strength and authority stem from our standing as a non-partisan and objective community partner in the broad scope of work reflected in our mission. Our work products in areas such as land use, transportation, and sustainability therefore are received as a trusted source of insights and data that reflects the issues in our growing region.

Characteristics of organizations' engagement and staff members' work style with partners and clients:

While MORPC fills some of the local data intermediary services in Central Ohio, we are one lead actor in the ecosystem of community data in the region. Collaboration is built into our mission statement, and one of our developed strengths as an organization is convening diverse partners and stakeholders. This strength touches all areas of the agency, from Transportation and Infrastructure Development to Government Affairs and Member Services, Communications and Engagement, Planning and Sustainability, Residential Services, and Data and Geospatial Analysis.

As conveners in our Data and Geospatial Analysis work, we recognize the value in building relationships beyond our team. We cultivate these relationships at all levels of the organization—from the analyst to the director—to the extent that it is a pillar of our organizational culture. We also build formal structures to strengthen our relationships, and to build the region's data ecosystem, whether through high-level committees, like the [Regional Data Advisory Committee](#), or our two user groups, the [Central Ohio GIS User Group \(COGUG\)](#) and the [Regional Information and Data Group \(RIDG\)](#).

As data collectors, we build and maintain relationships with staff in local agencies—including local governments, nonprofits, and higher education—to collect data and support the creation of regional datasets. For instance, we collect data from around 50 permitting agencies throughout the region to build a regional residential building permit database. We also have relationships with planning and development staff in those communities who validate the quality and accuracy of the data we collect.

As data analysts, we build expertise and knowledge internally around analysis methods and data sources but rely on subject matter experts to guide our assumptions about the work. For example, our ongoing [population monitoring](#) work relies on strong relationships with experts working in applied demography, economic development, workforce development, and housing. These relationships are developed both formally and informally. Formally, we present our analysis methods to our Regional Data Advisory Committee as an opportunity to collect feedback about our assumptions. We also convene ad hoc technical stakeholder meetings to present our methods and “ground-truth” the results. Informally, we lean on our networks of practitioners to have in-depth discussions around the social and economic trends that will shape population changes in Central Ohio.

As data providers, we strive for user experience-driven development of open data resources and project deliverables. In 2017, the Data and Geospatial Analysis team conducted research using a survey, focus groups, and interviews to understand the ecosystem of data users in Central Ohio and to develop a set of [Data User Personas](#). These personas, paired with our relationships with our clients and partners served by our work, are used to guide our thinking as we consider questions about the formats, level of detail, specificity, and interpretation to include in the data resources we produce and publish. This approach guides our provision of data from small one-off requests from members to large projects with publicly available deliverables. The figure, also taken from the Data User Personas project, illustrates the ways in which MORPC interacts with different types of organizations in the course of our data and mapping work.

MORPC Role		GATHER DATA	WORK WITH DATA	PROVIDE DATA
Audience Relationship		Data Providers	Partners/ Collaborators	Data Consumers
TIER ONE	Primary State Agencies	X	X	X
	Local Government Staff (Technical)	X	X	X
	Primary Federal Agencies	X	X	X
	Consultants	X	X	X
	Primary Non-Profit Agencies	X	X	X
	Transit Authorities	X	X	X
	Universities	X	X	X
	Utility Companies	X	X	X
	Metro Parks	X	X	X
	Other MPOs	X	X	X
TIER TWO	Commission		X	X
	Public Service Administrators		X	X
	Elected Officials		X	X
	Local Government Staff (Non-Technical)		X	X
TIER THREE	News Media			X
	Community/ Civic Groups			X
	General Public			X
	Secondary Non-Profit Agencies			X
	Unaffiliated Data Community			X
	Students			X
	Public Service Staff			X
	Real Estate Developers			X
	Businesses			X
	SOURCES	Secondary State Agencies	X	
Secondary Federal Agencies		X		
Data Brokers		X		

Beyond the relationships we build to support our core work, member services, projects, and initiatives, we also build relationships with other organizations who collect, assemble, and share data in the region. These include our co-applicant, [the Center for Urban and Regional Analysis at The Ohio State University \(OSU\)](#), and others such as [the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at OSU](#), and [SmartColumbus](#).

Please describe your organization’s activities and efforts related to improving equity, diversity, and inclusion:

Equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts are ongoing at the organizational level, and are increasingly a focus within all areas of MORPC’s work. Recognizing the region’s growing diversity and a need for the agency to better understand and to more directly address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, in 2018 MORPC convened a “Diversity in Local Government Working Group” consisting of local community members and special interest groups. This group developed a set of [recommendations aimed at improving diverse representation and voices in MORPC’s work, committees, and members](#). The products of that working group continue to guide MORPC’s diversity, equity, and inclusion work today. We have included tables on our staff, board, and committee diversity in the Appendix.

As a core value with the agency, MORPC focuses on six key areas of diversity and inclusion: Workforce & Leadership, Workplace, Service to Diverse Populations, Supplier Diversity & Procurement, Diverse Requirements, and Diverse Communications. Our Communications & Engagement department oversees these efforts, and our Diversity, Inclusion & Engagement officer helps ensure we are meeting our goals by regularly monitoring and evaluating our actions.

To provide one specific example of MORPC’s ongoing internal efforts, Following MORPC staff attending the organizational diversity training at the NNIP Partnership Meeting in Los Angeles, the Data and Geospatial Analysis section’s job descriptions were rewritten to reduce potential barriers to nontraditional applicants, and to affirmatively state the value MORPC places on having diverse staff and perspectives. These changes have since been incorporated throughout the rest of the agency.

As a result of the inequities exposed by COVID-19 and the social unrest as the result of the death of George Floyd, we recommitted our efforts to be more intentional in eliminating racism. We created www.morpc.org/eliminateracism/ to provide resources to our members and community partners to have critical conversations. The page also features resolutions from communities that have “*Declared Racism as a Public Health Crisis*” and best practices.

Recognizing the impact of structural racism, particularly regarding access to attainable housing and transportation for historically marginalized and underserved communities, we partnered with our local YWCA and the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity. Through this partnership, we provided training to our staff, MORPC members, and community partners on the history of redlining, racism in transportation, and its correlation to the social determinants of health.

We also featured training on unconscious bias and cultural humility. Additionally, we partnered with the Atlanta Regional Council to host a six-week conversation with leaders from across the nation on race and equity. Our conversation series received national recognition. As a result of the series, we created a tool guide for others to use to have these critical conversations.

To be more inclusive, we cultivated relationships with diverse organizations to ensure their members were aware of opportunities to provide comments on our planning processes. We also participated in community panels to discuss the impact of housing and transportation on the social determinants of health.

This past year, we included Racial & Social Justice in our Regional Policy Agenda to raise racial and social issues awareness. In taking this step, we are working with our legislature to address inequities in communities across our region.

While we have made some progress, we know there is more work to do. For 2022, we will be updating our Diversity & Inclusion Work Plan to include equity. We are also in the process of creating a regional equity strategy to better understand how policies and actions impact our region, especially as it relates to historically marginalized and underserved communities.

More specific to our work as a data intermediary, one of the top-level goals of MORPC's [Regional Data Agenda](#) states:

MORPC will serve as a model for DATA ACCESS, INCLUSION, & EQUITY, ensuring the benefits and opportunities data can create are extended to all Central Ohio residents. (Equity is a fundamental value underpinning all of MORPC's work. As such, all of MORPC's data work and all components of the agenda are undertaken with an emphasis on racial and social equity.)

Through this goal, the RDAC recognizes that there are certain activities that the committee and MORPC staff should undertake for the primary purpose of reducing racial and social inequity. These include improved tracking of our internal diversity and inclusion efforts, improved access to data and mapping resources by diverse users and reducing the effects of implicit bias that is inherent in data collection, analysis, and sharing. As reflected by the part of the goal in parentheses, RDAC also recognizes that all other aspects of MORPC's data work must occur through a racial and social equity lens.

In this respect, MORPC's work in diversity, equity, and inclusion has evolved substantially in recent years – reflecting a more direct focus on structural inequality and racism in data collection, analyses, and recommendations. Some of the Selected Projects discussed in the next section are the best examples of this.

SELECTED PROJECTS (MORPC)

[CENTRAL OHIO REGIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY \(RHS\)](#)

The RHS was a collaborative effort by public and private partners across the Central Ohio Region, led by MORPC, the City of Columbus, and Franklin County, to comprehensively evaluate and identify strategies to meet current and future housing needs. The process began with a thorough investigation of existing and projected housing needs in the region, grounded by both quantitative and qualitative assessments to understand housing supply and demand, barriers to development, and the regional housing finance landscape.

While the RHS spanned 7 counties, data was gathered, analyzed, and reported at the census tract level whenever possible to ensure outputs and implementation strategies were relevant at the neighborhood scale. In addition to the report itself, numerous data resources were produced during the RHS process., including housing submarket typologies, a displacement risk analysis, and an [Implementer's Toolkit](#). The latter of these presents the entire range of potential housing actions included in the RHS and allows users to explore and filter them based on several criteria, such as geography, area characteristics, housing issue, or type of action. This tool empowers users to customize implementation strategies to the specific needs and character of their community or neighborhood, while working within the broader regional framework created by the RHS.

Stakeholder engagement was the backbone of this process. Engagement activities included stakeholder convenings, regional strategy workshops, informant interviews and focus groups, and an online community survey. The RHS engagement strategy focused on ground-truthing findings and recommendations while building the capacity of decisionmakers to implement regional housing solutions. Further engagement with a broader range of community members is ongoing to advance the RHS vision and ensure implementation is grounded in the full range of Central Ohioans' lived experiences.

[CENTRAL OHIO GREENWAYS PRIORITIZATION PROJECT](#)

In its role providing staff and technical support to the Central Ohio Greenways (COG) Board, MORPC facilitates the planning and development of the region's multi-use trail network. The COG Regional Trail Vision calls for 500+ new miles of trails to be added to the existing network of over 230 trail miles, resulting in a truly interconnected network that meets both transportation and recreation needs. While COG supports and plans for trail development, individual jurisdictions are responsible for actual construction of trail projects. To better understand where new investments in trail infrastructure have the potential to impact the region most dramatically, MORPC conducted a trail prioritization study beginning with Franklin County. This effort resulted in communities coming together to focus on grant applications

that would help complete or build trails that have the greatest impact on getting access to neighborhoods that have traditionally been underserved.

This effort began with an assessment of existing and potential access to the trail network, and how equitably that access is spread across the county. All future trail projects were then evaluated across four impact domains – connectivity, health/environment, social equity, and economy. Based on their potential to provide new access and their scores across the four domains, a project prioritization was created that allows local governments, community groups, and stakeholders to see the impacts that any given trail project will generate. The granularity of the analysis allows decision-makers and community members to see neighborhood-level impacts of trail projects. Recognizing that certain factors may be more important in one community than another, in addition to prioritization by overall impact, the study also provides indexed scores and prioritization for each of the individual domains.

[INSIGHT 2050 CORRIDOR CONCEPTS](#)

To plan for the rapid and sustained growth of the Central Ohio region, which is expected to hit 3 million residents by 2050, MORPC and ULI Columbus have partnered on the insight2050 scenario planning initiative. MORPC served as the project manager for both phases and led and oversaw the consultant's and data efforts. The first phase of insight2050 looked at regional growth scenarios and the implications of continuing or implementing various development patterns. Upon achieving regional consensus around a desire for more focused, less sprawling growth than has occurred in past decades, the effort transitioned into a second phase, [insight2050 Corridor Concepts](#).

Continuing with a scenario planning approach, Corridor Concepts localized the analysis and strategies from the initial regional effort to five specific growth corridors (traversing multiple communities) in the region. The study considered scenarios under which a majority of the region's growth over the next several decades could be accommodated within these five corridors, with analyses, outputs, and implementation strategies that are applicable at the jurisdiction, neighborhood, and even individual property scales. Multiple communities and agencies, led by the City of Columbus and COTA, have moved into implementation of the insight2050 Corridor Concepts recommendations in multiple corridors through an [initiative called LinkUS](#).

COVID-19 RESPONSE

As the COVID-19 pandemic and shut-downs impacted every aspect of communities, local governments and many other organizations turned to MORPC for guidance, information, and support. MORPC's first response, in keeping with our primary role as a convener for the region, was to quickly begin hosting weekly calls for member jurisdictions (one for municipalities and one for counties and townships). While these were valuable forums for local officials to share information and hear from public health, emergency management, and state & federal elected officials, they were also invaluable to helping MORPC understand and develop resources to address the most pressing needs communities were facing.

Prompted by requests for relevant, reliable, and timely information about rapidly changing conditions in Central Ohio communities, MORPC created a [COVID-19 Resource Hub](#). While national and state level data were readily available, there was no resource focused specifically on Central Ohio communities. As a trusted data intermediary, local leaders looked to MORPC for data and information, both to guide their own decision-making and for a resource to which they could direct residents and community stakeholders. In the early days of the pandemic, the Resource Hub focused on emergency response information including COVID-19 cases; guidance for local governments; and key community resources like food support, local hospitals capacities, utility bill moratoria, and transportation options. As the pandemic has evolved, so to have the tools in the Resource Hub, with less relevant resources being removed and new features continuing to be added like vaccination rate and sites, guidance on recovery funding, and Emergency Broadband Benefit usage.

While MORPC was able to pivot quickly to support the immediate response needs of the local community through convening & data resource, another of MORPC's fundamental roles is analyzing and planning for the long-term health and well-being of Central Ohio communities. In the MORPC's pandemic response, this resulted in MORPC working with several local partners to publish a series of policy briefs on the

lasting social and economic impacts of COVID-19. [The COVID-19 Policy Briefs](#) cover seven key topics (e.g., employment, housing, technology, and transportation) with a heavy emphasis on how the pandemic has exacerbated existing racial and social inequities. The briefs are intended to inform community leaders and organization as they work toward an equitable recovery. The briefs are often referred by MORPC staff and community leaders for story telling.

FUTURE PLANS AND SUSTAINABILITY (MORPC)

Your plans related to future local data intermediary activities:

As with the rest of MORPC's data work, the Regional Data Agenda is the primary driver of future data intermediary activities; followed to a lesser degree by other organizational strategy documents such as the Public Policy Agenda and Regional Sustainability Agenda. These resources are developed by MORPC staff in collaboration with committee and Commission representatives, for the express purpose of guiding the work of the agency in key domains.

More specific to the data intermediary role, MORPC has been and will continue to be focused on improving internal data management processes and infrastructure in order to make data more accessible to other staff within the agency and to external users. This work includes increased use of automation to facilitate efficient data collection and processing, and the creation of public-facing tools to make data more accessible and understandable - for example, MORPC recently launched a Central Ohio Population Resource Hub to provide easy access to Census and MORPC-generated population data.

In response to increased requests for research and insights from MORPC's membership and other stakeholders, various funding and partnership opportunities, and a perceived lack of community research capacity in the region, MORPC conducted a feasibility study for offering expanded community research services to members and partner organizations. This new capacity would differ from MORPC's existing planning and data analysis functions in that it would take a more proactive approach to identifying and understanding issues impacting the Central Ohio region. It will likely involve a combination of self-directed and fee-for-service research work, along with stronger advocacy for underlying investment in community research capacity and civic data infrastructure. The feasibility study recommendations call for an incremental rollout of new services over the course of 2022 and 2023 in order to build support and ensure the sustainability of any new services.

Your two-year outlook on the sustainability of the local data intermediary services you provide now and those you would like to expand:

Support for MORPC's current data intermediary activities is highly stable, coming from core federal transportation funding and member dues, both of which have increased on-average from year to year. MORPC has also taken on new statutory responsibilities in recent years, including establishing and administering the Central Ohio Rural Planning Organization and working toward creating the Central Ohio Economic Development District. With each of these roles comes additional responsibilities and funding for data and mapping support, which helps expand the reach of MORPC's data work to more issue areas and audiences in Central Ohio.

The expanded community research services being considered will employ a social enterprise approach, with a goal of becoming increasingly self-sufficient over time. While the new services may require some subsidy, particularly when they are starting out, they will not be pursued to the detriment of MORPC's core data and mapping responsibilities or funding. Over the next two years, MORPC plans to upgrade a position on the data team from a part-time intern to a full-time position, and to add up to two full-time positions for the newly formed community research team.

ORGANIZATIONAL INFORMATION (CURA)

Applicant organization name: Center for Urban and Regional Analysis (CURA)

Organization website: <https://cura.osu.edu>

Primary contact person for NNIP: Harvey Miller, Director, miller.81@osu.edu

Organizational structure (e.g., university, nonprofit):

CURA is affiliated with the College of Arts and Sciences at The Ohio State University. The CURA Director reports directly to the Division Dean for Social and Behavioral Sciences. CURA is administered by the Department of Geography who provides faculty and staff support. The CURA Director is a tenured/tenure-track faculty in the Department of Geography, with a 50/50 split between Geography and CURA.

Current and planned geographic area of focus (e.g. Washington, DC, metropolitan area; Cuyahoga County, Ohio,):

CURA primarily serves the Central Ohio region of Franklin County. Depending on the location of a project, the geography of our work will serve communities outside of the normal region.

CURA has 3 staff members in the organization. CURA typically employs 4 to 6 graduate and undergraduate students throughout the year on an as needed basis.

Current staffing:

Number of staff or full-time equivalents (FTEs) working in the organization: 4.25

Number of staff or FTEs working on local data intermediary activities (if not the same as above): 4.25

List of key staff members engaged in those activities along with a sentence describing their roles:

Key staff:

As the **Director, Harvey Miller** provides scientific direction and supervision for the center and is responsible for strategic direction and performance; seeks out new research projects and funding; develops collaborations with researchers at Ohio State and other universities on a global scale; works with community partners to identify strategic opportunities; manages the center's personnel.

As the **Consulting Manager, Adam Porr** is responsible for managing the center's projects for internal university and external clients; supervises graduate associates; develops tools and data products; manages CURA's data and computational infrastructure; assists in customer relationship management and business development.

As **Outreach Coordinator, Gerika Logan** develops and manages partnerships with local and state government and community organizations; works with center leadership and community partners. Provides and organizes educational and outreach events to The Ohio State University's urban mission, including workshops, presentations and community meetings; manages the center social media pages; creates content for blog, annual report; manages and maintains center website; provides marketing strategies and engages the community in CURA activities; compiles and distributes monthly CURA newsletter; engages in workshop development and presenting materials to support urban science and policy applications.

List of board or advisory board members and affiliations:

The CURA Advisory Board is comprised of seats allocated to organizations whose interests are aligned with ours. We consider these organizations to be key partners in the pursuit of our mission, and we believe the expert guidance provided by their representatives is critical to the success of our organization.

OSU Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences: Ryan King, Professor and Divisional Dean of Social and Behavioral Sciences

OSU Sustainability Institute: Elena Irwin, Faculty Director

OSU Translational Data Analytics Institute: Tanya Berger-Wolf, Faculty Director

OSU Libraries Research Commons: Joshua Sadvari, Geospatial Information Librarian

OSU John Glenn College of Public Affairs: Robert Greenbaum, Professor and Associate Dean for Curriculum

OSU Knowlton School of Architecture, City and Regional Planning section: Jennifer Clark, Professor, Section Head

OSU Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity: (vacant)

City of Columbus: Shoreh Elhami, Enterprise Data Architect & Citywide GIS Manager

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission: (vacant, formerly Aaron Schill, Director of Data and Mapping)

ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION AND ACTIVITIES (CURA)

Overall organizational mission and brief history:

CURA has its origins in the State of Ohio Urban Universities Program, which started in 1979 and provided funds to eight universities for local and statewide urban related research. To further the goals of this program, OSU launched the Urban and Regional Analysis Initiative in 1995, and this initiative resulted in a proposal to create the Center for Urban and Regional Analysis, which was approved by the university in 2001. CURA is seeking to become an interdisciplinary group of scholars in social, natural, and environmental sciences; applied economics; agriculture; engineering; health and medical professions; and the humanities. Our mission is to serve as a bridge across academia, industry, and the policy sector by providing spatial analysis of economic, social, environmental, and health issues in urban and regional settings in Ohio and beyond. We offer a wide range of support services for research that applies to urban and metropolitan areas, rural areas, and broader regional issues.

Overview of the current activities and services of your organization that are related to NNIP functions, including the assembly, and sharing of neighborhood-level data:

As a research center at an urban land-grant university, we engage in basic research at the intersection of urban issues and data science. Our most common research domains include mobility and accessibility, housing, health, and urban sustainability and resilience. We have significant expertise in geospatial data science, and most of our work employs these methods. Our work includes basic research, applied research, and community outreach, and it is common for our projects to include a mix of these. Our applied research and outreach programs are directly linked to our role as a data intermediary through locally-focused products and services that are explicitly intended for use by the local community. The outputs of our basic research tend to be more general and targeted at academic audiences, however this work is sometimes directly relevant to local institutions and often produces byproducts of interest to the local community. Whereas our basic research tends to include only academic collaborators, our applied research typically involves one or more community partners, either as a client or a collaborator.

Our recent work in applied research includes analyses of smart mobility program impacts; tools for surveillance of hospital-acquired infections; tools for tracking and surveying food security study participants; tools for the interactive visualization and selection of vacant parcels; and projects described below. Many of our applied projects have the explicit goal of producing or assembling neighborhood-level data or making it more accessible and useful to a particular audience.

Some of our recent work in basic research involves the development of more realistic measures of accessibility for transportation networks, social differences in travel and activity behavior, the impacts of COVID on transportation supply and demand dynamics, traffic safety, and the development of techniques for automatic extraction of geometry and attributes from historic maps for urban history research and outreach. We have also invested significant effort in concept development for an urban data observatory. When this is completed, we hope to use it to collect, transform, and analyze a broad range of data in Central Ohio to benchmark sustainability measures starting with environmental stressors and residents' perceptions of and responses to them.

In support of our research mission, we engage with transdisciplinary academic teams including disciplines such as geography, urban planning, public health, environmental science, computer science, engineering, and social work. We also engage with community partners including planning agencies, transit authorities, non-profits, and municipal public service departments and departments of neighborhoods. We frequently serve as the convener for these teams due to our multifaceted research interests and

extensive network of potential collaborators. This network and our ability to connect data users with data providers is a key enabler in our role as a local data intermediary.

We believe in the value and power of open data and expend significant effort to make our data products available for applications beyond the research that produced them. From time to time, we have also worked with the providers of the source data that we consume to make their data available to a broader audience. We strive to make the raw and transformed data available to the broadest set of potential users possible, subject to privacy considerations and data use agreements. When practical, we also publish our source code – especially code related to data transformation – to increase transparency and reproducibility and to encourage re-use of the code in other applications.

In addition to research, we further our institution’s land grant mission through a program of public outreach. For example, each November we partner with entities at OSU and other Ohio universities to sponsor a set of public GIS Day events that are meant to educate participants about geospatial data and technologies and encourage their adoption. The events typically include lightning talks about techniques, use cases, and projects; a map gallery and competition; and workshops focused on a specific tool or use case. We also regularly present sessions or workshops at the Ohio GIS Conference and the MORPC Summit on Sustainability. These presentations are nearly always focused on data and/or techniques, and often involve local data. Most recently we hosted a panel discussion on MORPC’s initiative to develop a local land-use and built-environment model using ArcGIS Urban. Pre-COVID we participated in the Women in Data Science event with OSU’s Translational Data Analytics Institute to promote data literacy among high-school age women (and men), especially from underrepresented minority groups. We also offer a themed set of three public events each autumn and spring semester, including two presentations by a nationally-regarded academic expert and practitioner expert, as well as a panel discussion featuring local experts. The public presentations by the visiting experts are often accompanied by invitation-only roundtable or “fireside chat”-style events to allow people with a special interest in the topic to benefit from a deeper discussion with the expert. These events typically do not have a direct connection to our role as a local data intermediary, but indirectly serve this role by helping us to convene people with similar interests and build the local network of potential data producers and data users.

Local data intermediary services alignment with organizational mission:

CURA’s mission makes us a natural fit for providing local data intermediary services. Our mission explicitly includes building relationships between academia, industry, the public sector, and the community. The data-intensive nature of our research work combined with the transdisciplinary and trans-sectoral emphasis of our outreach work naturally exposes us to a diverse set of data producers and data consumers, and we often serve as a de facto broker of data due to our frequent role as a data integrator and tool developer. Because much of our work falls under the umbrella of sustainability and because we construe sustainability broadly and include environmental, economic, and social factors, we find that our projects tend to have significant overlap with one another. Therefore, it serves our own purposes to make sure that the data and processes are well organized and accessible for our future efforts, and we also try to make them available to others to the extent we are permitted. Some specific examples are provided in the Select Projects section below.

In our [2020-2025 strategic plan](#), we define several goals that make our role as a data intermediary more explicit. One goal is to “increase the level of awareness in local communities regarding GIScience”. Our strategy to achieve this goal involves leading or participating in three major science-related outreach events over the next five years for the purpose of educating local data users about the value geospatial data and methods can bring to their work. Another goal is to “become a convener of regional data producers and customers to promote accessibility of comprehensive, high-quality regional data”. To further this goal, we plan to (1) engage with a regional or national-level network involved in urban research and data (we explicitly identify NNIP as the desired network) and (2) develop a formal partnership with MORPC (via a memorandum of understanding) to provide top-level technical support and data for community stakeholders. By formalizing these goals in our strategic plan, we hope to add

weight to our existing efforts to serve as a local data intermediary and to justify our efforts to university leadership.

Of course, it is critical that our efforts are consistent with the mission of the university. Fortunately, OSU has embraced its position as an urban land grant university, and we have received encouragement and positive feedback from leaders at several levels in the organization for our community outreach efforts. Since their inception, land grant universities such as OSU have always been expected to focus on “practical” research, and the cooperative extension services (of which OSU is a provider) were tasked to help practitioners apply this research. Although extension services were traditionally focused on agriculture and rural communities, the program has evolved in recent years to explicitly include [outreach in the urban context](#). We believe that CURA’s existing efforts as a data intermediary and our desire to formalize this role through our participation in NNIP serves to further OSU’s mission as an urban land grant university.

Characteristics of organizations’ engagement and staff members’ work style with partners and clients:

CURA’s projects and our collaborators are quite diverse; consequently, the characteristics of our interactions with them are similarly diverse. For example, our relationship with the Central Ohio Transit Authority data department has been largely incidental. They share their data with us, we add value to it in some way that supports our research, and then we share the results with them. These relationships are often characterized by pro bono effort and driven by independent but aligned interests. Most of our other relationships are more purposeful. We engage in fee-for-service projects intended to solve specific problems for clients, although even in these cases we seek opportunities to share byproducts or lessons learned more broadly if we are permitted. We also engage with other organizations as partners in pursuit of a mutual interest. An example of this is our work with MORPC to develop the Regional Sustainability Dashboard (described below), but it is also common arrangement when we pursue large transdisciplinary research grants. Other partners or potential partners include several OSU institutes (Sustainability Institute, Translational Data and Analytics Institute, Institute for Food and Agricultural Transformation), non-profits (Action for Children, Heritage Ohio, Greater Ohio Policy Center), local businesses (Empowerbus, Mobikit, Etch GIS, Trip Bikes) and government entities (especially the City of Columbus). Although some of these have produced collaborations and others have not yet, the increased mutual awareness between our organizations alone adds significant value. We are fortunate to have several avenues for funding, including grants, fee-for-service, and university support, which allows us to be flexible and pursue opportunities that might not have been possible otherwise.

Although our relationships are diverse at the organizational level, they tend to be similar at the interpersonal level. All the current CURA full-time associates are expected to proactively seek opportunities to build new relationships and strengthen existing ones. This tends to produce multi-level engagements from the executive level down to the technician level. These engagements are often peer-to-peer but are sometimes cross-level. Our associates are service-oriented and we pride ourselves on taking the time to understand our partners’ needs and the requirements of the problem they are trying to solve. Since our relationships span so many sectors and disciplines, we are careful to be cognizant of our own capabilities and those of our partners. We recognize that our partners are experts in areas where we are not, and we try to learn from them. Conversely, we recognize that we bring expertise that our partners may not have, and we try to invest the time needed to ensure that they are informed and included.

Finally, we strive to create opportunities to kindle independent relationships between our partners. Sometimes this involves introducing partners who are unfamiliar with one another, and sometimes it involves helping break down the silos that sometimes exist between partners who are already familiar. We provide these opportunities in a variety of ways, ranging from intimate round-table sessions held in conjunction with our hosted speaker series to ad hoc social hour events to simple “did you know” email introductions.

Please describe your organization's activities and efforts related to improving equity, diversity, and inclusion:

Our commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion is demonstrated through three facets of our operations, namely administration, events and communications, and projects. We have included information about our staff and advisory committee diversity in the appendix.

As part of a public university, CURA is committed to high standards for inclusion in the administration of our organization. We have a diverse staff, as described in the appendix, and we adhere to policies and guidelines documented in the university's [Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Policy](#). Our employees participate in annual gender-based discrimination training. Our office is accessible to persons with motor disabilities, and we have the resources and capacity to adapt the work environment, technology assets, and communications media to accommodate persons with vision and hearing disabilities as needed. OSU has a formal [flexible work policy](#) and CURA's leadership is committed to using this policy as a tool to reduce barriers that might exclude otherwise-qualified candidates. CURA is guided by an advisory board comprised of seats allocated to organizations whose interests are aligned with ours. Although the diversity of the board members is limited to a certain extent by the diversity of the staffs of the participating organizations, we strive to achieve diverse representation in spite of this constraint, and we have managed to build a diverse board as described in the appendix.

Diversity and inclusion are primary considerations for all aspects of CURA's hosted events. With participation from all CURA staff, we strive to select varied and multi-faceted topics related to urban issues to engage audiences with diverse backgrounds. We also consider diversity within an event series and across event series when selecting which speakers to invite. We use several strategies to ensure the inclusivity of our events for attendees including synchronous and asynchronous delivery, live captioning (available upon request), selection of venues that are accessible to attendees regardless of mode of travel, selecting venues that are accessible to attendees with motor disabilities, and by holding our events at lunchtime and providing free food (for in-person events) to encourage community involvement. We also strive to ensure inclusivity in our other forms of engagement by making our content available through multiple modes including email newsletters, our website, social media, and printed documents. All our digital communications are subject to OSU's [digital accessibility standards](#), which ensures that they are inclusive of people with motor, vision, hearing, and cognitive disabilities. In recent years we have started our events with a land acknowledgement recognizing the relationship between the site OSU occupies and the indigenous people with ties to the land.

Diversity and inclusion are typically interwoven into CURA's projects due to our mission to support urban and regional sustainability and resilience, including social equity and justice. Many of our projects, particularly those that arise from our own research and engagement agenda, have explicit inclusionary objectives. One such project is our nascent Ghost Neighborhoods project, which seeks to increase public awareness of Central Ohio communities destroyed by urban renewal projects, many of which were home to significant populations of color. We have also produced research and/or tools related to housing segregation and polarization, mobility and accessibility inequity across social groups and neighborhoods, infant mortality, the social and neighborhood determinants of opioid use disorder, public transit performance and access, environmental justice and other topics that disproportionately impact disadvantaged communities and deprived neighborhoods. We proactively opened a dialogue with faculty interested in Native American studies to discuss potential opportunities for collaboration.

We also consider diversity and inclusion in the execution of our projects. When evaluating unfamiliar data sources, we take care to consider the possible biases that may have been introduced in the collection or processing of the data before it came into our possession. On several occasions we have made our partner organizations aware of potential biases in the methods they were considering. When the project calls for data publication, we try to share the data at the greatest level of specificity that is allowable, so that other users can make their own decisions about how to process the data. When the project calls for aggregation, we look for opportunities to disaggregate the data by relevant factors to reduce the potential for our analysis to obscure disparate impacts to different groups of people. Of course, we recognize that we are not infallible, therefore we seek feedback from the eventual users of our products as well as

subject matter experts in other domains to make sure we have not unintentionally made exclusive or insensitive choices, particularly regarding visualizations. We make our data (including source data) and methods publicly available whenever possible to increase transparency of our choices and to foster reproducibility. Due to the highly interactive nature of some of our products, namely web applications, we make a reasonable effort to make the product accessible, then try to fill in any gaps by providing alternate representations of the information.

SELECTED PROJECTS (CURA) REGIONAL SUSTAINABILITY DASHBOARD

The Central Ohio Regional Sustainability Dashboard is perhaps the best exemplar of our data intermediary work and underscores the commitment to collaboration between CURA and MORPC. In 2017, MORPC convened representatives from member communities to create a Regional Sustainability Agenda, which included quantitative measures for sustainability objectives. In 2018, MORPC released the first report on the state of these measures in the form of the Tableau-based Regional Sustainability Report card. In 2019, MORPC asked CURA to help develop a Regional Sustainability Dashboard that would provide additional features and facilitate a more streamlined data ingestion process. The MORPC/CURA team spent the next year developing the [MORPC Regional Sustainability Dashboard](#), and this now serves as the official reporting tool for the Regional Sustainability Agenda. The development process was highly collaborative. MORPC staff took the lead on refining the methods used to compute the measures and identifying suitable input data. CURA developed the infrastructure for automatically retrieving, transforming, and archiving the data, and developed a custom web-based dashboard to visualize the output data. The work was overseen by a working group comprised of data and sustainability experts representing MORPC member communities including the City of Columbus, Ohio EPA, OneColumbus (an economic development firm), and many others. We met with this group monthly to share our progress and listen to their feedback about how we could tailor the product to better serve the needs of their constituencies and the greater Central Ohio community. This feedback was instrumental in the design of the dashboard and the implementation of the measures that it depicts. Although the data depicted on the dashboard is aggregated at the county or region level, much of the input data is more granular, and the input data, the output data, and the transformation process (including the Python code) are documented and available to the public. CURA and MORPC continue to collaboratively maintain the dashboard, and we are planning a set of improvements for 2022 that will incorporate changes to the Regional Sustainability Agenda and will make the data even more findable and accessible.

CENTRAL OHIO TRANSIT METRICS

An excellent example of CURA's work to improve community access to primary data is the work we have done with transit data from the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA). COTA publishes both their schedule data and their real-time vehicle location data as public feeds, however special expertise related to General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data structures and protocol buffers is required to make use of the data. Moreover, COTA does not maintain a historical archive of the data. With COTA's encouragement, CURA has been retrieving and archiving COTA's public data since January 2018. We have made the data more easily accessible to users in the form of two apps: one which depicts the [delays in the network](#) and one which models the [scheduled and actual accessibility](#) provided by the network. In 2022, we expect to complete a tool that will allow the user to analyze the attractions (homes, jobs, businesses, etc.) that are accessible to transit riders given a set of parameters. The tool will also allow users to easily extract transit data in formats that are easier to use, including spatial data formats and tabular formats. Although we are developing the tool primarily for our own use, we intend to make it available to the public, and we are also having discussions with representatives from the City of Columbus departments of planning and public service about how we can tailor the tool to facilitate the analysis needs of these departments. COTA leadership has informed us that they have used the existing tools informally from time to time to explore and understand anomalies in their services, including severe

delay events and service disruptions resulting from high-congestion events. The City of Columbus has already expressed interest in using the forthcoming tool to model the potential economic and equity impacts of a nascent transit-oriented development initiative known as LinkUS. The tools have also motivated - and continue to support - several ongoing threads of research involving transit service equity that we hope will influence COTA's future service planning efforts. We actively maintain a relationship with several departments at COTA - including their planning department and their data department - through ad hoc meetings and email exchanges. They willingly share their data with us, and we often share our tools, derived data, and analysis results in return. We have also provided consulting services to their data department from time to time.

FRANKLIN COUNTY OPIOID CRISIS ACTIVITY LEVELS (FOCAL) MAP

The FOCAL Map project is a good example of our role in compiling and transforming data neighborhood level data to support decision-making. FOCAL Map is a tool for surveillance of opioid overdoses for use by planners and researchers. Its main objective is to frequently gather data about responses to opioid overdose emergencies from Central Ohio emergency service agencies and make these data and derivative analytic products available via a convenient web application. CURA developed a sophisticated data pipeline to gather data and automatically standardize, transform, and analyze the data. We also developed a [public-facing web application](#) to display transformed data as well as relevant contextual data. Authorized planners and researchers can access a separate secure web application (created by the OSU College of Public Health) with access to higher-resolution data and more sophisticated analytical tools. This ongoing project involves a diverse team of collaborators including geographers, data scientists, public health experts, clinicians, social workers and others. Continuing maintenance and development of the tools are funded by a Centers for Disease Control Overdose Data to Action grant administered by the Franklin County Department of Public Health, and we collaborate closely with staff from that department during our weekly meetings. Much of the funding is allocated to working with community institutions such as Franklin County Addiction and Mental Health Board, Franklin County Children's Services, and ReLink (a services referral agency) to facilitate the inclusion of additional datasets maintained by those institutions, and to refine the tools to support the use cases of the institutions.

INFANT MORTALITY RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP (IMRP) DASHBOARD

Our role as a data intermediary also includes using neighborhood-level data to support state agencies. Since 2018 we have participated in the Infant Mortality Research Partnership (IMRP), whose collective goal is to determine where and to whom interventions should be targeted to reduce infant mortality, and how those interventions should be implemented. To this end, CURA and researchers from the OSU Department of Geography and OSU Colleges of Medicine Government Resources Center gathered sociodemographic, clinical factors, and service delivery (Medicaid) data and developed a custom web dashboard to make this data more accessible to researchers and service planners at Ohio Departments of Medicaid, Health, and Education. Additionally, the CURA/Geography team identified geographic clusters of infant mortality from address-level data and developed a census tract-level composite opportunity index to help the agencies target interventions more effectively. To date, access to the data and the dashboard have been limited to IMRP collaborators, however the partnership is considering making the dashboard and some subset of the data available to the public.

ACTION FOR CHILDREN CHILDCARE SUPPLY MAP

In contrast to the projects described previously which were focused on planning and research, we also engage in projects from time to time that provide a more direct benefit to the community. A good example of this is the Childcare Supply Map that we developed for Action for Children (AFC), a not-for-profit referral agency for childcare services in Central Ohio and a resource for parents/custodians and childcare service providers. AFC maintains a value-added database of childcare providers in Central Ohio that includes data from Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services, but is augmented by data collected and maintained by AFC. CURA developed a [custom web map](#) for AFC, known as the Childcare Supply

Map that allowed them to present the address-level content from their database to the public in a more useful way. CURA also developed scripts for automatically geocoding and validating the data in the database, which led to the discovery and correction of several defects in the data. CURA's map was included on the AFC website for several years until eventually AFC developed the necessary skills to maintain the map in-house, at which time they switched to a [Tableau-based map](#) which incorporated some of the design elements of the CURA version as well as some improvements. It is worth noting that the collaboration between CURA and AFC was motivated by the dissolution of Community Research Partners (a.k.a. Thoughtwell), the former NNIP partner for Central Ohio with whom AFC had previously contracted to provide analytical services. Although CURA does not have an active relationship with Action for Children, we are interested in collaborating with AFC or other community non-profits in the future.

FUTURE PLANS AND SUSTAINABILITY (CURA)

Your plans related to future local data intermediary activities:

In recent years, CURA has emphasized the outreach component of our mission, and we have invested heavily in our relationships with community partners with the intent to collaborate to solve problems of community interest. Through this outreach we achieved a better understanding of the data needs of our partners and the community more broadly. To accelerate this engagement, we have partnered with OSU's Sustainability Institute (SI) to build and strengthen relationships with the community and local governments. We are in discussions with the Educational Partnerships for Innovation in Communities - Network (EPIC-N): an organization that connects university resources to the needs of local governments and communities. Student-engaged research on community issues will be facilitated through capstone courses that span the university, including data-focused projects by students and mentors in the Department of Geography's new Masters in Geographic Information Science. Also, in collaboration with OSU SI, we are formalizing our partnership with MORPC through a memo of understanding that specifies areas of mutual strategic interests.

Maintaining and making new partnerships will also come in the form of a new affiliate program that includes an array of urban professionals from the private and public sector. This new affiliate program emphasizes creating relationships with the people who work in the communities we wish to connect with. Creating a dialog with our community members and being a resource to them will not only serve them but serve our professional partners. These new affiliates will aid us in the quality of our data services to focus our intermediary services on a wider network of communities.

CURA is also maintaining and possibly expanding our community dialogue via our very successful event series. In the autumn and spring semester, CURA hosts various speakers and panelists to discuss prominent urban topics that are facing cities and regions in Ohio and beyond. The recent change of making all CURA events temporarily online helped to increase event attendance. The attraction of webinar events allowed people outside of the normal geographic area to speak and attend events.

With respect to our data stewardship, we intend to continue our efforts to promote FAIR data principles by cataloguing all our data in a public repository - namely OSU's Dataverse instance - and by making our data accessible in common formats and through standard interfaces such as Dataverse and ArcGIS Online. We are also exploring ways to make our tools and data services accessible to a broader audience by publishing them on public-facing servers and sharing the source code in public repositories.

Your two-year outlook on the sustainability of the local data intermediary services you provide now and those you would like to expand:

The Ohio State University College of Arts and Sciences provides base funding support for CURA's research and outreach activities; we expect this support to continue. The broad range of services CURA provides includes mapping, spatial analysis, and custom tool and application development. CURA plans to continue these fee-for service options, while expanding on our grant proposal writing and funding. Although we have mostly focused on scientific research grants in the past, we are actively exploring other

sources of grant funding including federal and state grants and contracts related to transportation, energy, and public health, as well as grants from local and national philanthropic organizations. We are also seeking seed funding through various university programs, which we hope to leverage to improve our competitiveness for larger external grants.

LOCAL ENVIRONMENT FOR COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Please describe your organization's relationship with city or county agency staff and elected officials around the use and application of neighborhood data (e.g., recent projects or collaborations, briefings, requests for input or advice).

Both MORPC and CURA maintain strong ties to all levels of local government, from technical staff to elected officials. Local government users are among the primary audiences for the open data resources and neighborhood level analyses that MORPC and CURA make publicly available. Additionally, each of our organizations collaborates directly with local government staff as and elected officials more directly through project-specific guidance or technical assistance.

MORPC:

As a membership organization that both represents and provides services to more than 75-member local governments, connections to local government staff and elected officials are inherent to all of MORPC's data work. MORPC is generally recognized as the go-to resource for data and insights both about and on behalf of local governments in Central Ohio. We are often the first "call" local government leaders and staff make with a question or data need, and have established a reputation for being a reliable, objective, and responsive data partner.

MORPC's Data & Geospatial Analysis staff provide monthly updates to Commission and regular updates to other committees. Local government technical staff also make up a majority of the regular attendees at the COGUG and RIDG meetings that MORPC hosts. Whereas the Commission and committee meetings are a chance to provide information and hear feedback from elected officials and other local leaders, the COGUG and RIDG meetings are an opportunity to disseminate data and findings, share methods and technical skills, discuss challenges, and otherwise support the technical staff at local government agencies.

In addition to broadly serving local governments across the Central Ohio region, MORPC works closely with staff and elected officials at individual communities. As previously mentioned, technical assistance is one of the benefits available to MORPC members, and this most often takes the form of helping members collect, analyze, and present data about their jurisdiction or particular neighborhoods. MORPC's more in-depth project work, such as the examples described above, also involves continuous partnership with local governments. Every project on which MORPC works is developed with support from, in partnership with, and for the benefit of Central Ohio's local governments and their residents.

CURA:

Although CURA's outreach mission does not explicitly require us to establish relationships with government officials, we have chosen to foster these relationships nonetheless for the purposes of better understanding the urban and regional challenges facing Central Ohio and to contribute to the efforts to address these challenges when we can. To date, we have focused primarily on building relationships with MORPC, the City of Columbus, and the Central Ohio Transit Authority (an agency of Franklin County), however through our projects and events we have developed relationships with a number of other institutions at the local, county, and state levels including Franklin County Public Health, State of Ohio Department of Medicaid, State of Ohio Emergency Operations Center, State of Ohio Georeferenced Information Program, and others. Our primary contacts at these institutions tend to be appointed officials but we have established a few relationships with elected officials as well (typically council-people).

Our most enduring relationships tend to develop through collaborations on projects. We have participated in a recurring series of exploratory discussions with the directors and staffs of COTA's data department and planning department which ultimately resulted in our participation in several grant proposals with

COTA. One of these (a Federal Transit Administration grant) was awarded and we have been funded to provide consulting services for COTA's data department in their effort to use big mobility data to increase the timeliness and efficiency of service planning. We meet regularly with department technical staff to learn about their plans and progress and provide feedback. As noted previously, we also engage with technical staff on an ad hoc basis to exchange data and analysis results involving vehicle telematics and ridership patterns (including riders with disabilities).

At the City of Columbus, we have strong connections with the data and technology department, the planning department, and the public service department. Notably, the Columbus Enterprise Data Architect and GIS Manager is a member of our advisory board. As another example, we are currently working with the Transportation Planning Manager and the Deputy Director of Public Service to develop a transit accessibility modeling tool to assist with the rollout of LinkUS, a transit-oriented development initiative for the region. We worked closely with technical and management staff in the public service department to conduct an impact assessment for the Smart Columbus initiative, as discussed below.

Our outreach events have also been crucial in helping us to build relationships. Local government officials frequently attend our public guest speaker events, and some subset of our friends in local government is always included in the smaller invitation-only events that we frequently hold in conjunction with the main event.

If a college or university, please describe the relationship and history of the institution overall and your center specifically with residents and community organizations in the surrounding neighborhoods:

From a certain perspective, the Ohio State University is a highly-regarded institution that brings significant value to the community through educational opportunities, economic development, medical facilities, social welfare and community development programs, and athletics to name a few. OSU's campus is well-maintained and provides many amenities that are available for public use, often at no cost. Some community members may perceive OSU differently, however, depending on their personal experiences. OSU is comprised of tens of thousands of students, staff, and faculty representing hundreds of smaller, semi-autonomous organizations within the larger institution. Naturally, this leads to many and varied relationships with the community, and some of these may produce interactions that undermine the effectiveness of CURA as a local data intermediary.

A forthcoming report from the OSU Office of Outreach and Engagement based on recent research conducted by faculty from the City and Regional Planning, Public Affairs, and Social Work describes how the university is perceived as a White elitist institution that lacks the cultural competency skills to work effectively in communities of color and other marginalized communities, according to interviews with Black community stakeholders in Columbus. Indeed, OSU is a significant player in a broader set of White elitist institutions that holds most of the power in the city and surrounding region.

Regarding research, we understand that representatives of some neighborhoods, including Linden and Weinland Park, perceive the university as an agent of extraction. These neighborhoods, which tend to be the home for racially- and economically-marginalized groups, are frequent targets of researchers who "parachute in", take information, then disappear. They also tend to be the subject of proposed plans and programs which set an expectation for some future benefit that quickly evaporates when the proposal turns out to be impractical and the university representatives disappear.

The university is also a significant agent of real estate development and land use change, particularly in Weinland Park and the Near East Side. Both of these neighborhoods historically have been home to a large proportion of people of color and have also been historically disinvested. University-induced redevelopment in these neighborhoods is changing their character and is likely to change their demographic composition and housing costs, which is another potential source of tension.

Leaning on the experience of our friends at OSU's Kirwan Institute (described below), we understand that it is important for CURA to develop an identity in the community that is independent from the university

and the broader White elitist institution that it represents. This will require a pivot from our status quo to a certain extent, because most of our outreach in the past has focused on other organizations within that broader institution. Because we are a small organization with limited outreach capacity, we propose to start by earning the trust of community organizations who are already trusted by the community, perhaps starting with settlement houses. We understand that this trust will require a long-term commitment, especially in those neighborhoods with a history of researcher abandonment. We feel that membership in NNIP and the accompanying commitment to data intermediary work will lend itself to this commitment. Although our small size makes it difficult for us to have a pervasive presence, it does allow for more personal relationships with those individuals and organizations with whom we are able to engage. CURA cannot be a faceless organization because – at least for the foreseeable future - community members will always see the same few names and faces.

As we start to engage more closely with the community at large, we will continue to employ strategies to protect vulnerable individuals and groups and develop community capacity for data work. When working with individuals, we will rely on human subject protection standards including our Institutional Review Board process, informed consent of subjects including how data will be used and what risks the work poses, and adherence to confidentiality requirements. To protect vulnerable groups, we will be cognizant of bias throughout the data lifecycle, and we will work with community organizations and their constituents to mitigate this bias. We will disaggregate data as much as possible to ensure that data contributors are accurately represented. To foster community data capacity, we will continue to make data publicly available as much as possible. We will make data available in common formats through simple interfaces. We will select formats that are compatible with open-source tools and other free tools. For each project, we will carefully consider our audience to determine the most appropriate ways to present the data based on the anticipated users, starting with MORPC's data user personas and adapting these as necessary. Finally, we will continue to offer data literacy training when possible, and we will provide on-demand support for the use of our data and tools as capacity permits.

Please list other entities in your region that perform major local data intermediary activities, including a sentence or two about their role in the community information system. Describe any current or past activities you have collaborated on with them:

The Ohio State University Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and

Ethnicity has historically served as a key data resource in Central Ohio, stemming from their work on Opportunity Mapping and research on the geography of racial inequity. While their Opportunity Mapping data and methods continue to be a valuable resource; reduced staff capacity and an increased focus on national rather than local research, has significantly decreased Kirwan's role as a local data intermediary. However, they do remain a key partner to both MORPC and CURA.

SMART Columbus, which stemmed from Columbus winning the USDOT Smart Cities Challenge, does engage in some tasks of a data intermediary, most notably the development of data infrastructure. MORPC and CURA both have close relationships with the Smart Columbus team, and MORPC holds a seat on their Advisory Board, which ensures that opportunities for collaborative work are identified early and pursued when appropriate. CURA participated in early discussions with the Smart Columbus team to identify potential use cases for the data infrastructure beyond the needs of the Smart Columbus portfolio projects, intended in part to help make the case for long term sustainability. Ultimately the program produced the Smart Columbus Operating System (SCOS), which was intended to be a centralized data hub and analytics platform. CURA participated in a broader OSU team that was appointed to carry out a year-long impact assessment for a subset of the USDOT portfolio projects and made extensive use of some of the data assets and analytical tools built into SCOS. Both MORPC and CURA contributed data to SCOS, however data ingestion was governed by a designated curator, and ingestion of additional data sets and updates to existing data sets have not been supported. SCOS saw limited adoption during the USDOT grant and it has been suspended while city staff consider potential future use cases. Nonetheless, the Smart Columbus program still exists and is still focused on using technology for community benefit. More promising is work on a Community Information Exchange (CIE) to facilitate sharing of data among nonprofit direct service providers. While a valuable asset, the CIE is envisioned primarily as a tool for member/customer organizations rather than as a publicly accessible data hub. Any

open data resources or other publicly available information would likely be secondary to this stated purpose.

PARTNERSHIP DETAIL

Please discuss how CURA/MORPC currently work together, how the vision for local data intermediary services each org. can provide are complementary, and how you plan to communicate and work together in the future.

As co-partners in NNIP, MORPC and CURA will leverage our current partnership and complementary strengths to serve this role in the Central Ohio region and within the NNIP community.

Formally, a CURA staff member serves on the MORPC Regional Data Advisory Committee (RDAC), and a MORPC staff member serves on the CURA Advisory Board. These positions give each organization a direct tie to the other organization's direction-setting efforts. CURA staff members have also served on short-term working groups, for instance the RDAC Sustainability Dashboard working group. A CURA staff person was also selected to serve as the chair of MORPC's Regional Information and Data Group Steering Committee.

MORPC and CURA intend to hold informal monthly meetings to work intentionally on local data intermediary services collaboration. Our two organizations will seek project partnership and joint initiative opportunities, including identifying new modes of involvement in each other's formal governance structures. Both organizations will continue involvement in the broader community of local data producers and consumers via the Central Ohio GIS User Group and the Regional Information and Data Group.

Some examples of past and current collaboration between CURA and MORPC include the development of a Regional Sustainability Dashboard (discussed above) and joint participation in a 2019 National Science Foundation funded workshop to explore the possibility of a research network of urban sustainability observatories via data-enabled university-community partnerships. The two-day workshop included academics from OSU and Portland State University, as well as practitioners from city and regional planning organizations in Columbus and Portland. MORPC and CURA are currently incubating plans for collaboration on several future endeavors. CURA intends to leverage MORPC's ArcGIS Urban implementation as a platform to build models of neighborhoods lost to urban renewal and allow audiences to develop an appreciation for these neighborhoods and their former residents through 3D virtual reality experiences.

POTENTIAL RELATIONSHIP TO NNIP

How do you expect NNIP membership would benefit your organization?

The most direct benefit to MORPC of joining NNIP is the access staff will gain to a large, highly engaged network of professionals who work in community data and research. The strength of NNIP flows from the collective expertise and diversity of experience of its members. Exposure to that network will be enormously beneficial to members of MORPC's Data & Geospatial Analysis team, regardless of their role or stage in their career. The community data and research space and the role of data intermediary are quite niche, which limits the potential for peer learning within our region. Joining the NNIP network will connect MORPC staff with a broader community that can help grow their technical skills, open them to new ideas and approaches to community data work, and expand their professional networks in communities across the country. These benefits will not be confined to MORPC staff members but will also be disseminated to others in Central Ohio through the MORPC's user groups, committees, and project work. This benefit applies equally for CURA staff, but also for CURA student workers who stand to make connections with institutions that they may later consider joining as students or employees.

Beyond the benefits for individual staff members, there are several organizational benefits that MORPC will gain from NNIP membership. The first of these benefits is the opportunity to strengthen existing and

form new relationships with NNIP member organizations. The chance for increased collaboration with the other three regional council NNIP members (ARC, MAPC, and MARC) is particularly exciting. In fact, over the past five years MORPC, ARC, and MAPC have been intentional about deepening the ties between our three agencies, engaging in peer exchanges and collaborating on cross-site projects, such as the Racial Equity Conversation Series the MORPC and ARC co-hosted for regional councils. Joining NNIP will only work to further these ties to these and other peer organizations. The range of organization types represented across the NNIP membership also presents the potential for new partnerships and insights into the various approaches to the community data intermediary role. CURA will also benefit from deeper connections with other partners. We are especially interested in learning from the Kinder Institute for Urban Research (Houston) whose Urban Data Platform is a model for our initiative to create an urban sustainability observatory. We are also interested in getting to know the other university centers and institutes involved in the network and learning more about how they operate within their respective universities. We especially hope to learn what has worked well for them with regard to building relationships with and bringing value to community partners and finding funding to carry out projects of mutual interest with community partners. We also hope to gain a better understanding of the indicators and measurement techniques used in other communities, which we can use to inform our research.

Building strong organizational relationships paves the way for another, perhaps more measurable benefit to joining NNIP, the potential for cross-site collaboration projects. As a prospective NNIP member, MORPC had the chance to join organizations in nearly 20 communities as part of a cross-site project focused on using data to understand and communicate the social and health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. This funding and the support from Urban Institute helped MORPC tap into other local funding and allowed informal work that was already underway to grow into a formal project. Nearly as important as the funding were the peer collaboration calls and numerous training opportunities that were made available throughout the project. As NNIP members, MORPC and CURA look forward to participating in future cross-site collaboration projects.

Finally, membership in NNIP communicates an important message to the Central Ohio community about MORPC's and CURA's commitment to developing and maintaining public data resources and supporting community stakeholders by producing analysis and insights with those data. The aforementioned Research Services Feasibility Report recently completed by MORPC identified the need for increased capacity and funding for community research and data infrastructure in Central Ohio. Joining a national network of organizations serving similar roles in their communities will enhance the legitimacy of MORPC's and CURA's efforts to build up the local community data and research ecosystem.

What distinctive perspective, experience, or expertise can you contribute to the NNIP peer-learning network?

MORPC:

The MORPC Data and Geospatial Analysis team provides key support as an unbiased expert informing planning and policy decisions in Central Ohio. As such, our work touches many broad topic areas including transportation, land use, demographics, economics, sustainability, and equity. We look at these topics individually in some cases but are often interested in understanding their complex interactions. Our broad, and often interdisciplinary approach to analysis fosters a robust knowledge of data sources and methods across subject areas.

Beyond our wide-ranging scope of expertise, we also bring perspective representing a diverse geographic area. With members spanning a 15-county area, ranging from rural to urban, our team is adept at delivering local data intermediary services in a range of contexts. While any organization with a regional focus must balance these perspectives, the Central Ohio Region is particularly unique in the social and economic diversity of its communities. Columbus has been the fastest growing city in the Midwest over the past decade, with population growth and economic development more similar to booming Sun Belt cities than its midwestern peers. Yet, the region is also home to rural communities and small towns that are more like the rest of the state as they navigate the impacts of de-industrialization, along with areas of Appalachian Ohio that have an even longer history of stagnation and decline. The complexities and nuances of supporting the data needs of a booming and diversifying central city, an expanding exurban

fringe, and declining rural communities look very different, and our team is able to work across that spectrum of community types.

Technical expertise is certainly not unique among NNIP members, but MORPC is excited to contribute to the overall discussion and development of technical skills among the partnership. A few areas of MORPC's work where our experience and knowledge might be especially beneficial to other NNIP members include GIS systems development and analyses, population and demographic estimates and forecasting, and development and tracking of sustainability data and metrics. While less technical, we also look forward to engaging with NNIP members on questions of organizational strategy and support for data work, establishing strong internal data systems and policies and providing good guidance to others, and advancing the broader data and research ecosystem in our community.

CURA:

In recent years, CURA has come to be recognized within OSU and the broader community as a convener of transdisciplinary teams of academic researchers and community practitioners to study complex urban issues in Central Ohio and to provide technical support to help address those issues. Like MORPC, CURA maintains a diverse network of collaborators. A portion of this network includes local communities and institutions, and much of this portion overlaps with MORPC's network which bolsters the trust and credibility of the MORPC-CURA partnership. But whereas MORPC brings to the partnership a more extensive network of communities in the Central Ohio region, CURA brings a complementary network of academic researchers at OSU, most notably the College of Public Health, Department of Geography, Department of Geography, Translational Data Analytics Institute, Sustainability Institute, and many others. CURA also brings connections with academic and government research institutions outside of the region, including many institutions and regions that are not currently represented in NNIP. Some of the institutions in our broader network include Portland State University, Rutgers University, University of Michigan, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and the Greater Ohio Policy Center. Although we understand that other NNIP partners also have connections to these institutions, we welcome the opportunity to further reinforce the link with NNIP and to help promote the exchange of ideas.

CURA also brings significant expertise in analytical methods, especially methods related to spatial analysis. In particular, Dr. Miller is a thought leader in analytical time geography, and mobility and accessibility, and CURA has significant experience analyzing and modeling time-geographic systems and developing tools for this purpose. In the context of neighborhood indicators, these capabilities are especially useful for analyzing the accessibility provided by transportation networks. We also have significant knowledge of transportation-related data, data infrastructure solutions (proprietary and open source), and software development methods and architectures. We have some experience with data science and machine-learning techniques, and we are rapidly gaining experience in this domain, particularly as it applies to cartography and spatial data. Finally, we have a basic understanding of human-machine teaming (i.e., developing systems that jointly leverage the unique strengths of both humans and computers), and we collaborate closely the researchers at the Cognitive Systems Engineering Lab at OSU who are thought leaders in this domain. We look forward to sharing our knowledge and experience with the peer learning network and perhaps even engaging in cross-site projects.

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS FOR APPLICANTS IN CITIES THAT WERE FORMERLY IN THE NNIP NETWORK

If the former NNIP partner organization still exists, what is the relationship between the new organization and NNIP-related staff and the former organization and NNIP-related staff?

The previous NNIP partner representing the Columbus area, Community Research Partners (CRP), terminated operations in 2019. For years prior to and through its closure, MORPC enjoyed a close working relationship with CRP, which included collaboration on numerous projects – the most notable of which was the development of a community data hub called DataSource. Additionally, MORPC

and CRP maintained leadership roles in one another's organizations, with CRP's executive director serving on the MORPC Regional Data Advisory Committee, and MORPC's director of data & mapping serving on the CRP Board of Directors. Some former members of CRP's board of directors also serve in official roles with MORPC, on Commission, the Regional Data Advisory Committee, or the Executive Committee; and nearly all have some existing working relationship with MORPC.

During the 18-month period of closing operations for CRP, MORPC contributed in-kind support to CRP in the form of staff time of its data & mapping director to provide project oversight and research support as the Board and staff worked to close out CRP's remaining contract work. During this time, MORPC also assisted other Board members in finding new job placements for the CRP staff. By the time operations ended, all CRP staff seeking employment were placed in new positions, several with MORPC member governments. While the CRP staff are now spread among various agencies and organizations and there is little day-to-day collaboration with MORPC, there remains a positive relationship between MORPC and the former staff.

If relevant, what are the plans for transferring data and other assets (e.g., websites)?

At the time of its closure, CRP was maintaining numerous project-related datasets but was not maintaining and updating a publicly available data repository, thus there was no need to migrate a public data system or custody of open data resources, and there was minimal concern for impacts to public data accessibility. CRP did house a good deal of data pertaining to research projects, including archived reports, methodological documentation and research protocols, secondary datasets, and primary data gathered for projects. All the data from CRP's servers was migrated to the United Way of Central Ohio, where it remains archived but available should it need to be accessed. More importantly, most of CRP's most relevant reports remain available online through the organizations that commissioned or funded the work.

Do you see a need for an explicit communications plan related to the transition?

There is no need to develop a communications plan to navigate the change in NNIP partner from CRP to MORPC. However, it has now been several years since Columbus was represented in NNIP and awareness of the network has waned. MORPC and CURA will work together to develop a communications strategy to increase familiarity with NNIP among the leadership and boards for both of our organizations, and among the broader Central Ohio data community through existing channels such as the Regional Information & Data Group.

There may have been challenges with sustainability for local data intermediary activities in the previous NNIP home organization. How has the political, institutional or funding context changed since the closing of the former partner?

Many of the sustainability challenges that CRP faced are persistent and are felt by MORPC and CURA as well. Most notably, the funding pool for community research and data work is narrow and needs to expand, and there is a need for more underlying funding for data infrastructure and research capacity (in contrast with project-specific funding). As an independent nonprofit research organization, CRP was particularly vulnerable to this challenge - having to rely almost exclusively on fee-for-service revenues to support the organization became an unsustainable model.

By contrast, MORPC's and CURA's data intermediary roles are situated within larger, highly stable organizations that are committed to and invested in providing data intermediary services to the Central Ohio community. These functions at both MORPC and CURA are primarily supported by stable funding sources such as federal formula and grant funds, institutional operating budgets, and member dues. Rather than serving as the primary revenue stream, earned revenue supplements these other sources, allowing the MORPC and CURA teams to be responsive and flexible in their approaches to community research and data work.

It is also worth noting that MORPC recently completed a feasibility study that assessed the market and opportunities to expand its practical community research services. That study showed a strong perceived need for increased community research capacity and data infrastructure in Central Ohio, as well as numerous specific partnership and project opportunities. It also surfaced concerns about the appetite among funders to support underlying community data and research capacity. This speaks to the need for expanding the funding pool, educating community leaders about the value of community data infrastructure, and building awareness and capacity of the community data ecosystem – all things that will be supported and strengthened by MORPC and CURA joining NNIP.

REFERENCES

CURA:

Andrew Wolpert, P.E.
Smart Columbus – Deputy Program Manager
City of Columbus Dept. of Public Service

Comments: CURA developed a close relationship with Mr. Wolpert while working on the year-long Smart Columbus impacts assessment project described above. Historically the mission of Smart Columbus was driven substantially by a USDOT Smart Cities grant and focused on mobility and technology, however the program is now being re-envisioned as an agile, collaborative innovation lab that anticipates and advances what is new and next at the intersection of technology and community good.

Sophia Mohr
Chief Innovation Officer
Central Ohio Transit Authority
For scheduling, please contact Deborah Schierholt: schierholtdj@cota.com

Comments: CURA has collaborated with Ms. Mohr and her staff in a variety of capacities, but especially through consulting and sharing of data and exploratory analysis results. CURA and COTA are natural partners due to our long and ongoing interest in transit mobility and accessibility research and COTA's demonstrated commitment to transit data development and utilization.

Elena Irwin, Ph.D.
Faculty Director, Sustainability Institute
Distinguished Professor of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences in Economics & Sustainability
Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics
Ohio State University

Comments: CURA has a long and multi-faceted relationship with Dr. Irwin through our collaborations with the OSU Sustainability Institute, including research and authorship collaborations, community-focused project collaborations (including the Smart Columbus impacts assessment), and internal project collaborations such as development of OSU's Campus Sustainability Map. Dr. Irwin serves on CURA's advisory board, and CURA's director, Dr. Harvey Miller, serves on the faculty advisory board for the Sustainability Institute. CURA and the Sustainability Institute are currently working with MORPC to develop a memorandum of understanding that will promote opportunities for future research collaborations.

MORPC

Pat Losinski
Chief Executive Officer
Columbus Metropolitan Library(CML)

Comments: The library is an active MORPC Commission member and has engaged with MORPC on several initiatives, most recently around broadband access and equity in the light of the pandemic and virtual schooling. The result of this recent effort was the formation of the Franklin County Digital Equity Coalition, which includes more than 30 public, private and non-profit entities throughout Franklin County working to create long-term solutions to digital equity.

Elena Irwin, Ph.D.
Faculty Director, Sustainability Institute
Distinguished Professor of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences in Economics & Sustainability
Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics
Ohio State University

Comments: MORPC has been an active partner with the Sustainability Institute since its inception. Most recently, MORPC collaborated with OSU and Dr. Elena Irwin on an NSF grant. Long-term, CURA and the Sustainability Institute are currently working with MORPC to develop a memorandum of understanding that will promote opportunities for future research collaborations.

Joe Mazzola, MPA
Health Commissioner
Franklin County Public Health

Comments: Franklin County Public Health has been an incredible partner to MORPC for many years now. Most recently, we are engaging with them around local air quality monitoring as well as walk audits and Complete Streets policy creation. Furthermore, Joe has been instrumental to MORPC membership in providing weekly health updates during the midst of the pandemic and advising on the COVID-19 Resource Hub.

APPENDIX – COVER LETTER (MORPC)



MID-OHIO REGIONAL
MORPC
PLANNING COMMISSION

111 Liberty Street, Suite 100
Columbus, Ohio 43215
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TTY. 1.800.750.0750
info@morpc.org

February 11, 2022

To: Executive Committee
National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP)

Re: Application for Columbus/Central Ohio NNIP - Letter of Intent

Dear Executive Committee:

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is pleased to submit our joint application with the Center for Urban and Regional Analysis (CURA) to become NNIP co-partners for the Central Ohio Region.

As you know, Community Research Partners (a.k.a. Thoughtwell) was formerly the NNIP Partner organization for the Columbus area. Together, MORPC and CURA are uniquely positioned to serve as the new Central Ohio NNIP Partner organizations. We have complementary skillsets around community data, such as:

- Broad knowledge of local data resources and producers in the Central Ohio region
- Experienced partners, using data to support planning and policy decisions across the public and nonprofit sectors
- Commitment to increasing data capacity in the region through user groups, open data, and providing technical support to local governments and other organizations with limited capacity

We look forward to joining the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership and are excited to learn from and with the members as well as share best practices and information. We pledge our intent to provide local data intermediary services and to follow the NNIP model as part of our membership.

If you have questions regarding MORPC's part of the application, please don't hesitate to reach out to myself or our Chief Regional Strategy Officer and Sr. Director of Planning, Dr. Kerstin Carr (kcarr@morpc.org / 614.233.4163).

Kind Regards,

William Murdock, AICP
Executive Director

William Murdock, AICP
Executive Director

Karen J. Angelou
Chair

Erik J. Janas
Vice Chair

Chris Amorose Groomes
Secretary

APPENDIX – COVER LETTER (CURA)



College of Arts and Sciences

Center for Urban and Regional Analysis

0126 Derby Hall
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Columbus, Ohio 43210

614-688-0527
cura@osu.edu

7 February 2022

To: NNIP Executive Committee
Re: Application for Columbus/Central Ohio NNIP Co-Partnership

Dear Executive Committee:

On behalf of the Center for Urban and Regional Analysis, I respectfully request your consideration for our application to represent the Central Ohio region in the in the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership jointly with the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC). As a prospective partner, we have enjoyed engaging with NNIP and getting to know some partners over the past two years through the annual meeting and various other channels, and we are looking forward to formalizing our involvement with the network and increasing our participation. We are committed to our role as a local data intermediary, and we are excited about the prospect of leveraging the knowledge and capabilities of the partnership to improve the local data environment in Central Ohio and fill the gap left by the dissolution of the previous NNIP partner. We are committed to the NNIP model and look forward to learning from and sharing our expertise with the other partners in the network. Finally, we are excited about this opportunity to further strengthen and diversify our existing relationship with MORPC.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Harvey J. Miller
Bob and Mary Reusche Chair in Geographic Information Science
Professor of Geography and City and Regional Planning (courtesy)
Director, Center for Urban and Regional Analysis (CURA)