

# Supporting Data-Informed Advocacy

Thursday, June 13, 9:00 – 10:15 a.m.

In the past, NNIP has promoted its partners as “neutral” data providers, with one organization dubbing themselves “Data Switzerland,” but we now have a better understanding that no data or interpretations of data are neutral. Independence and integrity are still critical to succeed as a data intermediary, but partners have always worked to get their data and analysis into the hands of the residents and groups advocating for investments, planning, and policy changes to benefit low-income neighborhoods and families.

Stronger relationships with advocates can lead to better intelligence on priority issues and emerging questions that could benefit from data and analysis. Close communication with these audiences also can inform how we share data and make analysis accessible. However, taking positions on policy issues means other audiences may discount your work and possibly place you in opposition to government agencies that are data providers and collaborators. With explicit intention, planning and local knowledge, we believe partners can strengthen connections with advocates without damaging their reputation for independent and rigorous analysis. The approaches will differ among partners depending on their institutional and political context, but we can learn from one another.

***The purpose of this session is to hear different perspectives on working with advocates, suggest specific strategies for other partners to consider, and contribute to general lessons for current and potential partner organizations.***

Kathy Pettit from the Urban Institute will moderate the session and share how staff at Urban Institute as a national research organization have been thinking about closer partnerships with advocacy organizations. Three partners will each give a five-minute presentation introducing their organizations' approaches to working with advocates.

- Seema Iyer from the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance at the University of Baltimore will share their shift in strategy after the unrest following Freddie Gray's death and how their data was used in a housing advocacy campaign.
- L'Tanya Durante and Libby McClure from Durham's DataWorks NC will discuss how their interactions with advocates inform services to neighborhood groups.
- C Terrence Anderson from the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs at the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities will describe their intentional focus on community organizing with a racial equity framework that guides their engagement with advocacy organizations.

We will then have a brief panel discussion before shifting to audience questions.

**Discussion: (25 minutes)**

- What approach does your organization take in supporting advocacy groups?
- How do you balance interest in providing data to social justice advocates and in maintaining relationships with governments, funders, and other actors who may be the targets of the advocacy?
- How do you ensure your analysis remains independent and trusted source of information?