**NNIPCamp Denver**

Session 2: Wednesday 10/22/2014, 3:15pm-4:00pm

Location: Sage

Session Title: Data Standardization

Organizer: Doni Crawford

Primary Notetaker: Rob Pitingolo

Participants: Parks [left early], Smith, Allen, Spurlock, Raleigh, Garvey, Martinez, Gradeck [arrived late]

[Session begins]

Crawford: We’ve heard complaints in the past in our city about inconsistent measures. How has this been dealt with in other cities? We can’t compare data across neighborhoods because of mis-measurement. We had 3 solutions. Local data collaborative to standardize collection; but it’s not free. Let’s provide that tool to organizations.

Raleigh: We’ve started in Detroit, I want to hear about the Oakland experience.

Garvey: We create a common platform and survey for collection. If you want to elevate data in a comparable way there has to be a platform to do that. A lot of times it’s about digitizing information. A lot of the processes we use are neighborhood specific. There might be an area of higher need in a city. This is actionable information so it’s kind of the anti-standardizing - you need to collect nuanced information to help a neighborhood address its issues.

Smith: We’ve been doing a project with municipalities. CIty collects data and puts it on their portal. Suburbs are a different story. They have different building codes, different capacities. We want to work in south suburbs of Chicago, a distressed area.

Martinez: Sometimes with data standardization, we follow some guidance but you have some local community members who don’t. You need something that everyone can live with. If you have guidance that people don’t like they won’t use it.

Spurlock: What can we do to help nonprofits collect data in a way that’s useful later on.

Allen: There’s a long road between wanting to do something and doing something. Stuff costs money. The social/emotional component ought to be part of school readiness. How to measure that has been a hot topic.

Garvey: You collect data but ultimately report out some categorical thing. Is the problem low/medium/high? Can’t answer that if the data is all over the place. The researcher wants to summarize, wants to create bins. How can you translate into low/medium/high?

Raleigh: We did a big Motor City Mapping survey. We had Detroit residents and some drivers and collected data on properties. Hundreds of thousands of parcels. All data were folded together with other data back to parcels - utilities, fires, etc. Lots of data all tied to parcels now. Then we conducted analysis. How can you have blight removal for the city. Gotta start somewhere. There are disagreements within the city about how to collect. If I can’t rectify that, how can I compared to neighborhoods in Oakland?

Garvey: My son has asthma and they came in and took all kinds of information about my home. Code inspectors don’t ask any of those questions when assessing a home.

[Parks leaves]

Martinez: People in government come and go. They have different ideas. One person wants to come in and overhaul a system to improve or fix it.

Smith: Beyond standardization the data as to be available, accessible, digit.

[Gradeck enters]

Raleigh: I hope to inspire other people do do this work. We work in Detroit, there are hundreds of municipalities nearby. I can’t get data from all these places, develop relationships with all these people. Maybe if there is a single platform, they will get on board with that. We are paying people to keep data fresh and update. The dream is that people just want to contribute data for their neighborhood. Probably not realistic. We want to help agencies ask the right questions, like the buildings John [Garvey] mentioned. Don’t have multiple inspectors ask the same questions over and over.

Gradeck: There’s a web app for transit riders to report how many people are on your bus, so disabled riders know. There’s a small group of heavy users.

Raleigh: I’ve got no solutions. Good discussion though.

Allen: I don’t work with data. But we, because of funding, are required to collect data. I’ve seen a big shift from “here’s money, go do good” to “here’s money, go collect data”. An organization may not be opposed to data gathering but it doesn’t seem feasible.

Gradeck: Did you talk about things like standard numbering, addressing, etc. Anyone have experience? My hurdle is parcel numbers. Six datasets, six different formats. Each requires a process to our favorite one. We point out those problems.

Smith: What’s an example of that?

Gradeck: City vs. County tax collector. Building inspections, GIS. Liens, foreclosures. Some people use dashes, some remove leading zeros. Pointing out these problems can be a good first step.

Martinez: It helps when you know what people do and why they do it. Rather than tell people they’re doing it wrong.

Raleigh: People got sick of hearing from us on that. When people send data and the format is wrong, it’s painful to get them to re-do it with corrections. Enormous political pressure was needed to get any standardization done.

Gradeck: It’s leadership, old legacy systems. People have nice tools to do address standardization. How do you get people to adopt that? Chicago has lots of cool stuff going on. People were still doing data collection on paper as recently as last year. When they’re doing that, they don’t care about using data, they’re doing it for statutory reasons.

Garvey: We’ve had luck with SeeClickFIx adoption. It reduced the response time for broken sprinklers. It takes a geographic coordinate rather than having a call with a qualitative description. It can be cheaper long term to invest in GPS.

Gradeck: SeeClickFix is great when it connects to 311. Sometimes cities want their own system, not one like that.

Crawford: We have some pilot projects to figure out core indicators to describe neighborhood health. Everyone has indicators that they think are best.

Garvey: I saw that in the Denver maps from earlier. There are clearly different realities for people in different parts of the city.

Gradeck: This stuff is really tough. Sounds like a good reason to drink later.

Allen: People have a lot of different ways of getting at whether a child is ready for school, kindergarten, etc. Questions can be asked many different ways.

Garvey: That’s the difficulty of standardizing. All the child care agencies are different. Interactions are different.

Allen: Sometimes the child stays at home, gets a good environment.

Pitingolo: It’s nearly time, any last comments?

[No comments]

Crawford: Thanks.

[End of session]