Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
Assessment of Need and Opportunities for Data Intermediary Services in the Capital Region
Executive Summary, November 2014

This assessment includes a summary of opportunities and actions related to resources for local data in the Capital Region. The assessment is based on work delivered by the Hartford Public Library's recently discontinued HartfordInfo program, related services provided by other organizations and institutions in the Capital Region, interviews with and feedback from stakeholders in the Capital Region and lessons from the experience of data intermediaries in the Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP). This work was commissioned by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving and conducted by Jake Cowan, an independent consultant with a history of working with NNIP.

Functions and Value of Data Intermediaries

Data intermediaries are valuable for cities and regions. Data intermediaries ensure that data is useful for organizations and coalitions that need it to make informed decisions about managing programs, resources and operations. In doing so, data intermediaries directly influence outcomes such as educational attainment, public safety, economic development and community health. Data intermediaries also play a key role in creating and supporting dialogue about and development of public policy. They are frequently at the forefront of policy conversations, providing relevant data that policy makers can use to pursue policy changes as well as to develop new programs that improve quality of life.

Data intermediaries, including the local partners in NNIP, perform a wide mix of activities in fulfilling their missions. A core function of data intermediaries is to **assemble, transform and disseminate data**. Most commonly, data intermediaries release data directly to the public over one or more web sites in different forms. Local data intermediaries also **apply data to achieve impact**. They work actively with individual neighborhood associations, community development corporations (CDCs) and other nonprofits in helping to apply their data in support of community improvement initiatives – in planning, implementation and subsequent evaluation. A third major area of activity for data intermediaries is **using data to strengthen civic capacity and governance**. To varying extents, data intermediaries enhance the capacities of stakeholders to use data by providing training and technical assistance.

Assessment Findings That Inform Recommendations

- There is a culture of current and past practice of using data for planning programs and services in Hartford.
- Although these examples of current and potential uses of data exist, they are for the most part, siloed.
- The quality of available data, particularly state level data, is a challenge for users.

- No single institution presents itself as having capacity, willingness and a mission fit to serve as a data intermediary for the Capital Region right now.
- HartfordInfo had many accomplishments and the region should build off of those in the future, although new data intermediary functions are also strongly desired by users.
- Metro Hartford Progress Points has created a platform for the Capital Region that has raised the visibility of the importance of data, through the support of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.
- A diverse regional and statewide group of funders necessary to sustain data intermediary services has not been developed.

Assessment Recommendations

The primary finding of this assessment is that data access in the region is improving through the investments the Foundation has made in Progress Points, web sites and assets being developed by statewide partners such as the CT Data Collaborative, DataHaven and UCONN's State Data Center, as well as the implementation of open data policies in towns and at the state level. However, simply making data available *is not enough* to create change. There is some existing practice in using data that would evolve and expand if brought together as a community of practice. Given existing assets, much progress can be achieved through low-cost investments and leveraging assets in the region. This would also develop momentum and support for more robust uses of data in public policy work in towns, the region and at the state level that have clearly had value in other cities and that would translate to value in the Capital Region.

The following recommendations are next steps for the Capital Region to develop data intermediary capacities and, specifically, to generate a culture of and stories about the value of data as a tool for improving neighborhoods, informing program development and impacting public policy. Some suggestions for possible roles for organizations in implementation are included to illustrate how existing capacities in the region align with the work ahead.

1. **Support the expansion of open data to additional towns in the Capital Region**
Open data policies are the building blocks for providing geography-specific and record-level data, like what was provided by HartfordInfo, for towns across the Capital Region.

2. **Engage in strategic conversations with statewide partners working to make national and state level data available for the Capital Region and all Connecticut towns**
Several statewide organizations provide national and state level data sets at the town and neighborhood levels. Given these existing programs, Capital Region stakeholders should engage in strategic conversations with these organizations to have the interests of the Capital Region represented in the tools and programs they create.

3. Seek statewide partners to work with to advocate for mutual data access interests and goals

Key gaps exist in access to data in the Capital Region that are likely gaps that are shared challenges for other interest groups from around the state. Capital Region stakeholders should identify partners with shared interests who can effectively join in advocating for access to specific data sets, or the development of state policies that support access to data.

4. Convene data users working at the regional and community levels to network and collaborate

There is already a group of individuals and organizations that place high value on the importance of data as a tool they use to improve their decision making and broaden their impact. These interests will be more powerful with a combined voice that can share best practices, develop consensus goals for improving data access in the Capital Region, and serve as constituents and advocates for new investment in data intermediary services.

5. Celebrate success

To support growth, and particularly to demonstrate value to potential investors, successes need to be documented and celebrated. Often overlooked in program design, stories and blog posts delivered through newsletters and on web sites help to grow support for the work, particularly when data users take the stories to their communities and use them to describe the important role of data in their work for the community.

6. Broaden the base of data users in the Capital Region through existing programs and assets

Stakeholders in the Capital Region should look to the existing programs and assets they have already developed – which are substantial – to grow the base of data users in the Capital Region and expand the practice of data being used in practical ways in the nonprofit and public sectors.

7. Reassess the landscape in 12-18 months

Data accessibility is improving in important ways at the state and local level that need to further grow and evolve before a new data intermediary service is established. The important work already underway should continue for the next 12-18 months before the Capital Region considers starting a new data intermediary service.

Next Steps

The activities outlined in these recommendations are necessary to create a broader community and to generate outcomes that will attract additional investment in data intermediary services. Moreover, each of these recommendations will create results that grow the data ecosystem in the Capital Region, and influence quality of life outcomes for its residents.

Moving forward requires a commitment by all stakeholders to support this work. To move forward, Capital Region stakeholders next need to convene, discuss these recommendations in detail, agree to goals for the next 12-18 months, and agree to roles in implementation. These roles are best developed and owned locally by those who do the work.

The following assessment and recommendations include a high level of summary of themes, opportunities and actions related to creating and maintaining data intermediary services in the Capital Region.

The work that led to these recommendations was commissioned by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. In response to the Hartford Public Library's HartfordInfo Program not continuing, the Foundation requested an assessment of opportunities for data intermediary services in Hartford and in the Capital Region. The assessment process included an examination of recent/past work delivered by HartfordInfo, similar and related services provided by other organizations and institutions in the Capital Region, and lessons for the Capital Region from the experience of data intermediaries in the Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership (NNIP). Jake Cowan, an independent consultant with a history of working with NNIP, led the assessment.

The assessment included interviews with stakeholders in the Capital Region such as staff from the Foundation, past and current funders of information services in the Capital Region, organizations that have been HartfordInfo users and partners, representatives of city government, organizations that might serve as an institutional home for a data intermediary service and HartfordInfo staff. Interviews were conducted over the phone and in person, covering topics such as the needs of data users, institutional capacities of data providers, partnerships and relationships among data providers and development prospects.

Based on themes across more than two dozen interviews with stakeholders in the region[1], as well as an investigation and review of supporting documents, assessment findings and recommendations were drafted and shared with stakeholders during an in-person meeting. Feedback from this review was incorporated into the final assessment results and recommendations that follow.

Data Intermediary Functions

This work initially began with the inclusion of the premise that data intermediary services are valuable to many cities and regions, including the 35 cities participating in the Urban Institute's National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership. Data intermediaries, including the local partners in NNIP, perform a wide mix of types of activities in fulfilling their missions[2] including:

1. Assembling, transforming and disseminating data
2. Applying the data to achieve impact
3. Using data to strengthen civic capacity and governance

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[1] A full list of interviews conducted for this assessment is provided at the end of this document
[2] "Strengthening Local Capacity For Data-Driven Decision Making." Kingsley, Pettit, and Hendey. June 2013. The Urban Institute.

A core function of data intermediaries is to **assemble, transform and disseminate data**. Most commonly, data intermediaries release data directly to the public over one or more web sites in different forms. Often, their web sites have a section on "neighborhood profiles" where users can select a specific neighborhood and then access recent and historical data on conditions (in the form of maps, charts and tables). They also sometimes make copies of parts of their underlying datasets - on specific topics or for specific communities – available for download. They further disseminate data through special reports, brief data updates on specific topics, or comprehensive community indicator reports on a broad selection of indicators of neighborhood well-being in their cities.

Local data intermediaries also **apply data to achieve impact**. They work actively with individual neighborhood associations, community development corporations and other nonprofits in helping to apply their data in support of community improvement initiatives – in planning, implementation and subsequent evaluation. In some cases, they do analytic work, mapmaking and report writing, etc., themselves. In the preferred approach, however, they work as a coach, helping local stakeholders develop and apply the data directly. Most often, there is a mix of these two approaches, with the intermediary assisting communities with interpretation of the data as a basis for strategic planning and decision making.

Data intermediaries are also frequently asked to undertake studies relevant to policy for city-wide or metropolitan-wide entities: for example, the Mayor's office or city council, specific local or state agencies, and civic leadership groups. Unlike the pure provision of data, these also require much more interpretation and policy analysis. As above, data intermediaries sometimes do much of the work themselves and simply present their findings and conclusions to those that commissioned the work. Again, the preferred approach is to work as a coach in helping their clients work directly with the data so as to develop their own findings and conclusions and a sense of ownership for the final products.

A third major area of activity for data intermediaries is **using data to strengthen civic capacity and governance**. To varying extents, data intermediaries enhance the capacities of stakeholder groups to use data by providing training and technical assistance. The audiences for training and technical assistance include community groups, staffs of nonprofit agencies, government employees and others who want to learn about their communities in more depth and about how to use data to accomplish their own missions more effectively. Training on data sources, uses of data, and data portals may be provided as part of this work.

The Value of a Data Intermediary Service in the Capital Region[3]

Stakeholders participating in this assessment expressed a desire to be better informed and to have better data to use in their work to improve the quality of life for residents in the Capital Region. Stakeholders also clearly expressed that they wanted data to be available *and used*, not just posted to the web. The data intermediary functions described above are well suited to provide the Capital Region with data tools that are connected to uses.

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[3] Examples from other cities presented in this section are based on content in <u>Strengthening Communities with Neighborhood Data</u>. Kingsley, Coulton and Pettit. September 2014. The Urban Institute.

Data intermediaries work to ensure that data is useful for organizations and coalitions that need it to make informed decisions about managing programs, resources and operations. In doing so, data intermediaries directly influence outcomes such as educational attainment, safety and health outcomes in communities. A clear example of this, and what is possible if data intermediary capacities were firmly established in the Capital Region, comes from work that took place in Austin, Texas that used data as a tool to address childhood obesity. Children's Optimal Health (COH) works to improve children's health and has adopted data intermediary services as core organizational functions; COH is an NNIP member. COH, partnering with the Austin Independent School District (AISD), mapped spatial patterns of overweight and obese children in Austin alongside other neighborhood health indicators. Their findings revealed that areas with poor health outcomes faced unique variations of positive and negative influences on health, and solutions needed to be tailored to each community. These findings have been shared widely with community members, policy leaders and funders and have served as the blueprint for a series of programs designed and implemented by the AISD and city and county governments to address childhood obesity. Using the roadmap COH developed through its analysis, programs that were developed created improvements in outcomes such as a decrease from 70% to 50% of children in one neighborhood in North Austin with poor cardiovascular health. A major driver of this improvement was the introduction of a physical fitness program to three neighborhood schools, a program introduced in response to the COH analysis.

Interest in applying this approach to community issues in the Capital Region was clearly expressed in interviews conducted during this assessment. Interviews also revealed that organizations are limited in their ability to work in this way, as they are spending time and resources seeking data that would otherwise be available through a data intermediary service. Projects and initiatives take longer while data is sought to inform important decisions, or, decisions are made without the benefit of important context. While this mode of operation is not uncommon in the nonprofit field, data intermediaries reduce or eliminate these scenarios and ensure that local groups are working with the best available data when making important decisions, and provide support for interpreting and using the data. Data intermediaries also build capacity locally over time, and individual organizations become more targeted and sophisticated in how they use data to increase their impact and effectiveness.

Another example of how a healthy data ecosystem influences community quality of life comes from Dallas, Texas. The Foundation for Community Empowerment, working with the Institute for Urban Policy Research at The University of Texas at Dallas, has assembled quality of life indicators and created an annual quality of life index for Dallas neighborhoods. The summary index has revealed year over year consistent representation of disparities in quality of life across Dallas, with neighborhoods in the south lagging behind other neighborhoods in multiple indicators such as measures related to jobs, housing quality, public safety and education. This work has been prominently featured in significant detail in the Dallas Morning News, including a spread in 2010 that earned the paper a Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing. The data used in Dallas Morning News reporting and across the work of local data intermediary partners has been used to hold elected officials and local leaders accountable for investing resources in neighborhoods in the south of the City. As a result, public advocates have tools to use in creating calls to action in south Dallas, with recent successes such as securing $650,000 in funds for crime prevention programs in the neighborhood in 2013. Data has played a key role in influencing how resources are allocated and problems are addressed in the city.

Data intermediaries also play a key role in creating and supporting dialogue about and development of public policy. They are frequently at the forefront of policy conversations, providing relevant data on a range of topics – from affordable housing to education to public safety – which policy makers can use to pursue policy oriented improvements as well as develop new programs that improve quality of life in communities. In response to the foreclosure crisis, multiple examples exist from around the country of data intermediaries working with community organizations and government leaders to develop data tools to identify and preserve properties at risk of foreclosure, as well as target interventions in neighborhoods hardest hit by foreclosures. In these cases data intermediaries directly played a role in mitigating the impact of the foreclosure crisis and preserving homes for families.[4]

Data intermediaries work from a neutral and respected position in their regions and find success in accessing data needed for policy conversations that is often otherwise unavailable or difficult to access. Their neutral standing strengthens the usability of their data, and empowers community members to work on an equal basis with decision makers using the best available data.

Another primary value a data intermediary brings is the opportunities they can open to national networks. Data intermediaries have a strong track record in helping cities and regions compete for funds and resources associated with national programs and initiatives, as well as helping to implement those initiatives. Recent examples including roles for data intermediaries in the federal Promise Neighborhoods Initiative and Choice Neighborhoods Initiatives. In addition, as this assessment project is anchored in the experiences of data intermediaries that participate in the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership, it is also notable that NNIP facilitates multi-city projects that bring resources and results to communities. Examples include projects addressing school readiness, prisoner reentry and foreclosure impact.

Key Findings That Inform Recommendations

There is a culture of current and past practice of using data for planning programs and services in Hartford.

Across the interviews conducted during this assessment, many examples were presented of successful and emerging uses of data. Examples of data being used to inform planning, advocacy and program administration were also evident among nonprofit leaders participating in focus groups tied to Progress Points conducted by the Foundation early in 2013.

The examples include workshops where nonprofits have participated in learning how to better use and apply data in their day-to-day work. They include an individual downloading census data and taking it out to share with stakeholders to help them better understand the context for their work. They include several examples of data being used in successful grant applications, as well as in community planning efforts that use data as a tool to assist in setting priorities for the neighborhood. Examples also cover the use of data that organizations own about their programs or the people they serve being used to inform their programmatic work.

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[4] See examples in <u>Putting Data to Work: Data-Driven Approaches to Strengthening Neighborhoods</u>. December 2011. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

An important companion to these examples is the promising emerging practice of open data and civic technology in the Capital Region. This includes the implementation of open data policies at the City of Hartford and the State of Connecticut. Open data policies will, over time, fill in gaps for specific data sets needed by practitioners to do their work. Civic technologists are a resource to help these practitioners access, visualize and use the data in productive ways. Definitions of 'civic technology' vary, but generally include people who use data or technology in advocacy, citizen engagement, neighborhood improvement and journalism in the public interest.[5]

Although these examples of current and potential uses of data exist, they are for the most part, siloed.

Although these examples are robust, they are loosely or not at all connected. In some cases, organizations are struggling to find publically available data that other organizations are accessing and using. This reflects the lack of a recognized central place to go for data, and also reflects a lack of connectivity among data users. A productive data ecosystem thrives and innovates when individual users connect and share successes and struggles. In this case, the organizations lacking data were no further than a phone call away from saving valuable project time and resources. By collaborating, users have more opportunities to learn about available sources of data needed to inform their work.

Other impacts of siloing are seen in organizations that have common data advocacy interests in accessing state or local data, but lack of awareness of their common interests. This represents another gap where progress could be possible through better connectivity among users.

Data ecosystems are complex, and knowledge and capacity are often distributed among many users and organizations. Connectivity and networking are crucial to ensuring that best practices are collected and shared. The detriments of siloing include duplication of effort, duplication of resources invested in accessing data, and missed opportunities for progress.

The quality of available data, particularly state level data, is a challenge for users.

Several interviewees expressed a range of concerns about data maintained by state and local governments. Problems articulated included inaccurate data, data that lacks documentation/metadata and data provided in unusable formats (such as scanned paper files that are not machine readable). Users cannot effectively engage in improving and using data when they lack proper documentation and can only access non-machine readable files. A lack of documentation or a clear concept of why the data is important also creates negative perceptions about the value of the data.

No single institution presents itself as having capacity, willingness and a mission fit to serve as a data intermediary for the Capital Region right now.

To be successful as a data intermediary in the Capital Region, an organization or collaborative needs to have the capabilities to perform the functions described earlier in this document, the willingness to

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[5] For more discussion on open data, civic technology and data intermediaries see "Putting Open Data to Work for Communities." Pettit, Hendey, Losoya and Kingsley. June 2014. The Urban Institute.

adopt data intermediary roles as organizational priorities, as well as have the mission and business fit that will sustain energy and investment in the work.

No single organization meets each criterion today. However, some data intermediary functions exist and are being performed across multiple organizations in the region. The CT Data Collaborative and DataHaven are performing some data intermediary roles that include assembling and distributing data for the Capital Region (and statewide). The State Data Center at the University of Connecticut and the State's Open Data Portal assemble and distribute data as well. Trinity College provides multiple examples of offering training and technical assistance in the use of data to individuals and organizations in the City of Hartford. Multiple organizations are, individually, using data in compelling ways to create impact in their fields of work. However, as previously noted, this work is exciting but is also siloed. Further, across these existing services, major gaps still exist in the region in data availability, technical assistance, and training for using data to achieve impact.

In the absence of a single institution that can perform each data intermediary function, a data intermediary service can be developed and represented in the region through a collaborative structure. Experience from the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership provides context for how to move forward in adding data intermediary capacity and operating data intermediary services through a collaborative structure that leverages capacities spread across multiple organizations. Seven NNIP partners are operated through a collaborative structure in which different organizations are responsible for delivering data intermediary functions. Examples include Atlanta's Neighborhood Nexus, operated by a partnership that includes the Atlanta Regional Commission, Emory University and the Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta. Emory University assembles and cleans the data, where it is shared on the web and maintained by the Atlanta Regional Commission. The Community Foundation raises and manages funds for Neighborhood Nexus. The collaborative also partners with the Civic League for Regional Atlanta, which conducts outreach in communities and provides training on using the data. Georgia State University works with Neighborhood Nexus data, provides policy analysis, and generates reports for the web site[6].

Interest in neighborhood level (small area) data is present in the City of Hartford.

Quality of life indicators such as the well-being of residents, availability and quality of public services and community institutions, and overall safety and health vary across neighborhoods. This matters for the public sector and for nonprofits that need to make decisions about how to organize, prioritize and deliver resources in their work to improve quality of life indicators. This matters to residents who advocate on behalf of their neighborhoods and need data to inform their work. This matters for funders who increasingly recognize that place is important in the anticipated impact of their investments.

Through interviews conducted during this assessment, stakeholders working primarily in the City of Hartford recognized the importance of neighborhood level (small area – such as census tract) data. Examples included expressions of need for data to inform neighborhood plans and to use in deciding

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[6] For more information, see: http://neighborhoodnexus.org and "Neighborhood Nexus Makes More Knowledge Accessible in Communities," Georgia State University Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, The Briefing, Research 2014. http://aysps.gsu.edu/files/2014/05/Briefing-Research2014-Final.pdf

where to allocate resources across the City. This affirms that while HartfordInfo no longer provides these data, a market still exists that needs access to neighborhood level data. Stakeholders are stating that they need and want to be better informed and that the lack of data about the places where they work makes decision making challenging and limits progress in the region.

HartfordInfo had many accomplishments and the region should build off of those in the future, although new data intermediary functions are also strongly desired by users.

HartfordInfo documents many successful uses of data over the course of their time serving the Hartford community at the Hartford Public Library. The program also provided a valuable service as the go-to place for policy-oriented research, news and information about the region. These successes point to needs for data that still exist. In addition, stakeholders interviewed want to see that data compiled and posted to the web is used – through training and technical assistance that is available in the community, and through application of the data to inform program planning and policy discussions.

Metro Hartford Progress Points has created a platform for the Capital Region that has raised the visibility of the importance of data, through the support of the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.

Stakeholders interviewed during this assessment widely endorsed the creation of the Progress Points community indicators initiative as a positive step forward for the region. Progress Points is seen as a program with potential, and has affirmed the Foundation's leadership on data issues in the Capital Region. The listening campaign that was conducted in creating Progress Points was inclusive and Progress Points is seen as neutral and respected, an important asset that enhances its relevance.

Given this receptivity and success, Progress Points is a platform for organizing support for related work including developing data intermediary services in the region and leading the implementation of recommendations resulting from this assessment.

A diverse regional and statewide group of funders necessary to sustain data intermediary services has not been developed.

Across the experiences of NNIP members, there are very few examples of successful data intermediary services that are able to sustain their operations with just one funder. This assessment did not identify significant prospective investors in data intermediary services in the City of Hartford or the region. This represents a challenge for the region going forward. Investments in this space by the Foundation are prerequisites to creating the infrastructure that will attract new investment. Over the long term, however, new funding partners are needed both to add capacity and to affirm the value of the data intermediary work underway across the region.

Several stakeholders noted funding opportunities exist at the state level, particular where the needs of the Capital Region are consistent with needs in other regions and towns. In a recent survey of local data

intermediaries in the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership[7], 40% of organizations indicated receiving local or state government funding for general operations, and 65% indicated receiving local or state government funding for specific projects. The only source cited more frequently as being available for data intermediary work is local foundation funding. As stakeholders look for partners to expand the pie of available funding for these services, developing support for investments from the state and local governments is closely aligned with what works for other data intermediaries nationally.

Assessment Recommendations

The primary finding of this assessment is that data access in the region is improving through the investments the Foundation has made in Progress Points, web sites and assets being developed by statewide partners such as the CT Data Collaborative, DataHaven and UCONN's State Data Center, as well as the implementation of open data policies in towns and at the state level. However, simply making data available *is not enough* to create change. There is some existing practice in using data that would evolve and expand if brought together as a community of practice. Given existing assets, much progress can be achieved through low-cost investments and leveraging assets in the region. This would also develop momentum and support for more robust uses of data in public policy work in towns, the region and at the state level that have clearly had value in other cities and that would translate to value in the Capital Region.

The following recommendations are next steps for the Capital Region to develop data intermediary capacities and, specifically, to generate a culture of and stories about the value of data as a tool for improving neighborhoods, informing program development and impacting public policy. Some suggestions for possible roles for organizations in implementation are included to illustrate how existing capacities in the region align with the work ahead. However, in order for this work to move forward, local stakeholders need to convene, discuss these recommendations in detail, agree to goals for the next 12-18 months, and agree to roles in implementation. These roles are best developed and owned locally by those who do the work.

Specific Recommendations

1. **Support the expansion of open data to additional towns in the Capital Region.**

The City of Hartford is building an approach for providing geography-specific and record level data, like what was provided by HartfordInfo, which can be replicated in other towns in the Capital Region. The City of Hartford's Open Data Portal is providing access to the city's administrative data. At the same time the Metropolitan Hartford Information Services (MHIS), the City of Hartford Department that manages the Open Data Portal, is willing and enthused to provide national and state level data sets through their data portal as well. The MHIS team is investigating the addition of commonly requested and needed data files (such as census data) to the City's Open Data Portal.   The team additionally has capacity to provide technical assistance in using the portal to neighborhoods in the City of Hartford. The

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[7] "Paying for the Work: Insights on Funding from the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership." Presentation by Kathy Pettit, Tom Kingsley and Sharon Kandris. September 2014. Full report forthcoming.

Hartford Open Data Portal is 'federated' with the State's Open Data Portal so that local users can access state level data in one location. This model is replicable in other towns in the Capital Region provided those towns also pursue the implementation of open data platforms and strategies.

Specific approaches to support the expansion of open data in the region include:

- Identify, with input from partners such as Capital Region Council of Governments, municipalities in the Capital Region that are ready to implement open data policies and connect them with resources as soon as possible. Available resources and strategies include:
  - The State's Open Data Portal contract allows for building five 'micro-sites' that are essentially open data sites for municipalities. New Haven and Stamford have claimed two of these licenses. Tyler Kleykamp from the Connecticut Office of Policy Management (OPM) which is responsible for the Open Data Portal, confirmed that these licenses are first come first serve.
  - The CT Data Collaborative also can enable the creation of sites based on an open-source platform.
  - Open data can also be implemented more simply by adopting practices such as posting Excel documents to existing municipal web sites. This approach can offer towns a way to start slowly with open data, as well as provide an accessible path to participate in open data collaborations.

  Establishing momentum and initial success is critical for new and emerging initiatives, such as an effort to expand open data policies. Early adopters provide a roadmap for the next round of participants and also serve as potential mentors. With this in mind, this and related efforts should initially target municipalities where open data policies are most likely to take hold – particularly those that have leaders willing to commit to implementation and capacity and resources to devote to the work.

- The CT Data Collaborative is also seeking to grow the open data movement to new towns in Connecticut. Given mutual interests, the Collaborative and stakeholders in the Capital Region may find ways to work together to support growth. This may include common advocacy for state level resources directed to open data projects, or joint investment in technical assistance and organizing for towns in the Capital Region.

  Common interests may also include advocacy for specific data sets. Tyler Kleykamp and OPM are working on releasing new data sets on an ongoing basis to the State's Open Data Portal. Capital Region stakeholders can work with partners such as the Collaborative to identify priority data sets desired by the Capital Region, and work with OPM to identify the timeline, parameters and barriers to accessing those priority data sets that reside with state agencies.

2. **Engage in strategic conversations with statewide partners working to make national and state level data available for the Capital Region and all Connecticut towns.**

The findings of this assessment did not identify any one organization ready to take on the leadership role in assembling, transforming and disseminating data. Additionally, stakeholders interviewed universally expressed that any new data infrastructure for the Capital Region should be developed with a clear connection to how it will be used. Some fatigue was expressed regarding duplication of effort and the creation of web sites that are not built to last or be sustained. One interviewee expressed concern that creating a new web site or data intermediary service would detract from both the work of the CT Data Collaborative as well as the good work done to date with Progress Points.

The CT Data Collaborative is already providing national and state level data sets for every town in the state. They are in the midst of developing new tools and implementing changes to their web site to improve how data is accessed and visualized. A new platform for the Capital Region specifically would likely be duplicative with this effort. In addition, institutional partners at the state level also offer resources for accessing national and state level data sets. The CT Data Collaborative distributes data from the State Data Center at the University of Connecticut (UCONN) and the State's Open Data Portal. The State Data Center at UCONN provides a point of access for all census-related data sets, as well as tools and technical assistance for visualizing census data. DataHaven is increasingly collaborating on a statewide basis including with Capital Region partners. The State's Open Data Portal is progressively adding new data sets from state agencies for download. Led by the State Office of Policy and Management and supported by an executive order, the Open Data Portal is continually updated with fresh data and is advancing access to data for communities across the state.

Given these existing efforts, stakeholders in the Capital Region should engage in strategic conversations with these statewide partners to have the interests of the Capital Region represented in the tools they develop – such as inclusion of specific data sets or added functionality for geographic specificity if the need/want for neighborhood level data is surfaced in towns other than the City of Hartford.

3. **Seek statewide partners for the Capital Region to work with to advocate for mutual data access interests and goals.**

Key gaps exist in access to data in the Capital Region that are likely gaps that are shared challenges for other interest groups from around the state. Identify partners with shared interests at the state level, who can effectively join in advocating for access to specific data sets, or the development of state policies that support access to data. As an example, key data sets related to public safety and education are not available at the record level or with geographic specificity from the State, because they are not reported to the State in disaggregated formats. While local open data policies will create access to these files on a town by town basis, wholesale change will only occur in response to a legislative or executive directive at the state level.

Potential partners with shared interests may come from the higher education field, such as universities or university consortia seeking access to data for research purposes; Councils of Government that need

data as a planning, priority setting and decision making tool for their member towns; the CT Data Collaborative; and issue based coalitions seeking data to support their work.

In addition to sharing common interest in access to data, statewide partners could also effectively advocate for funding to support their shared interests.

4. Convene data users working at the regional and community levels to network and collaborate.

A key finding of this assessment is that there is already a group of individuals and organizations that place high value on data as a tool they use to improve their decision making and broaden their impact. These interests will be more powerful with a combined voice that can effectively share best practices, develop consensus goals for improving data access in the Capital Region, and serve as constituents and advocates for new investment in data intermediary services.

The Hartford Foundation is well positioned to play a facilitating and convening role in organizing these interests. This assessment identified acceptance and endorsement of the lead role the Foundation has taken in convening a conversation about data needs in the region. In particular, Progress Points is viewed as an asset in the region, both as a product and as a process to organize leaders in the region in discussing data needs and priorities. The Foundation leading a collaboration of stakeholders on data issues is a natural next step in its work.

In addition to Progress Points, other interests likely to lead and participate in collaborative work include the civic technology community that is emerging in Hartford. Civic technology projects may include developers who create visualizations and applications using open data and other publically available data or workshops that teach citizens how to access and visualize data. Examples of this community are present in Hartford such as on the Real Hartford news site[8], the CT Mirror's data stories[9], and at reSET's community space[10].

Other possible stakeholders for this collaborative include practitioners actively using data in their work today, such as those identified through the Foundation's 2013 focus groups related to Progress Points. Individuals who participated in Trinity College's Open Data Visualization Workshops in the summer of 2014 are also strong candidates to target for participation.

One possible format for organizing these interests is to convene a bimonthly or quarterly interest group meeting where an expert/presenter is heard, common issues and challenges are discussed, and connections are made among practitioners. The Capital Region would benefit from a convening format that is informal and broadly open and accepting of newcomers. It is also crucial that the agenda for convening is set and owned by participants, so that it speaks directly to their interests and needs.

Convening regular meetings will help to create energy for implementing other recommendations discussed in this assessment, as well as provide an opportunity for individual and organizational leaders

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[8] Kerri Provost, "Random Facts from Open Data: Zones," September 29, 2014, accessed October 15th, 2014. http://www.realhartford.org/2014/09/29/random-facts-from-open-data-zones/
[9] CT Mirror Data, accessed October 15th, 2014. http://ctmirror.org/data/
[10] reSET Community Space web site, accessed November 5th, 2014. http://www.socialenterprisetrust.org/

to emerge. Participants that take advantage of this convening opportunity to grow their capacity will be the lead candidates to participate in operating a data intermediary service collaborative in the future.

One example in the field of this type of convening are *Data Fridays*[11] held monthly by the Chicago Office of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation. These events cover a wide range of topics – from specific uses of data in building community based initiatives and informing the delivery of services, to overviews and applications of specific web sites and resources. Events are held in different spaces around the city. In the Capital Region, spaces such as Trinfo Café, reSET's Community Space and the Hartford Public Library were all mentioned as possible places to host an instance of a convening.

5. Celebrate success.

The objectives of these recommendations are to create a stream of successful outcomes including improved data access in the region, a more connected community of data users that expands and evolves their uses of data, and new capacities built in organizations across the region.

To support growth, and particularly to demonstrate value to potential investors, these successes need to be documented and celebrated. Often overlooked in program design, stories and blog posts delivered through newsletters and on web sites help to grow support for the work externally, particularly when data users take the stories to their communities and use them to describe the important role of data in their work for the community. Communication about the uses and users of data helps generate momentum that supports broader stakeholder engagement goals.

6. Broaden the base of data users in the Capital Region through existing programs and assets.

In addition to the strategies outlined above, stakeholders in the Capital Region should look to the existing programs and assets they have already developed – which are substantial – to grow the base of data users in the Capital Region and expand the practice of data being used in practical ways in the nonprofit and public sectors.

The State Data Center at UCONN provides training on how to access and use data from the U.S. Census. Trinity College has hosted data visualization workshops. The CT Data Collaborative recently began using a data management system (CKAN) that could be leveraged to support an increase in the number of Open Data Portals in the Capital Region. Across each of the universities interviewed during this assessment, examples also surfaced of partnerships of professors, students and communities collaborating around uses of data.

Each of these programs and resources are part of the data environment in the Capital Region, and present opportunities such as growing the data community from an existing base or targeting capacity building to specific potential users in the Capital Region.

Given the scope and reach of the Foundation's interests and investments in the Capital Region, it also has a significant opportunity to create impact. Foundation programs present connected opportunities

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[11] Data Fridays, accessed October 15th, 2014. http://www.lisc-chicago.org/Data/Data-Fridays0.html

to broaden the base of data users in the Capital Region and support other goals noted in this assessment. Examples of this could range from identifying opportunities to include findings from Progress Points or other data products that emerge in the coming months in communications materials, to inviting grantees to send participants to the data collaborative convening outlined in the related recommendation in this assessment.

One specific example is to connect participants in the Nonprofit Support Program (NSP) to training and support for using data in their work. The Foundation has already built a community of likely data users in the region through NSP, such as alumni of the Building Evaluation Capacity program. These organizations already use data in meaningful ways to improve their programs or have a low bar to clear to add capacity to become savvy data users and participants in the community of practice of data users in the region. A training program that covers topics such as places to access data, tools for visualizing data and uses of data in planning and decision making would quickly add capacity to practitioners in the Capital Region as well as expand the pool of stakeholders with interest in the local data community. In addition, as stakeholders with a targeted interest in using data in their day to day work, they would instantly help establish a strong practice of moving beyond data for data's sake and applying data in practical ways.

Launching a training program requires resources. However, the potential to embed this in NSP, such as through working with Building Evaluation Capacity alumni or connecting this to the strategic planning programs, represents a high payoff strategy for developing a stronger and wider base of users of data in the region.

The basic and most valuable concepts can typically be covered in a half or full day training. If 3-4 instances of this training were held for classes of 12-15 people over the next year, it would represent a major step forward in building a culture of data use in the region. This scale of startup would also generate lessons and experiences to inform the development of additional training.

Another specific example of a leveraging opportunity provides a template that can be applied to other programs. The Foundation is currently sponsoring research with partners in the Capital Region using the Early Development Instrument (EDI). The project includes collection and visualization of neighborhood-level data for schools in Hartford and West Hartford, and emphasizes interpretation and application of the data to inform policy and practice. This and other projects that follow the same form expose new audiences to the importance of data. In particular, they demonstrate the value of geographic specific data (such as for individual schools or specific neighborhoods). Demonstrating the use and value of data in other towns through projects like this also complements efforts to grow open data policies in the region.

7. Reassess the landscape in 12-18 months.

The recommendations identified above reflect that now is not the right time to establish a new data intermediary service in the Capital Region. Data accessibility is improving in important ways at the state and local level that need to further grow and evolve – a process that is already in motion. Gaps in that work will emerge and present support and investment opportunities.

In addition, while several organizations have capacities and interests in using data in policy making and programming, and in providing technical assistance and training, a strong community of practice needs to emerge to create a constituency for data intermediary services. A new data intermediary now would struggle to organize and connect with a network of users and supporters it needs to thrive.

If implemented, the recommendations above will create a strong culture and readiness for a data intermediary service to establish and serve the Capital Region. Key issues to monitor in reassessing the landscape include:

- Does the Capital Region now have access to national and state data at the neighborhood level for each town in the Capital Region through the CT Data Collaborative?
- What organizations and individuals have most consistently contributed to the regional community of practice?
- Is the community of practice a cohesive voice in advocating for resources and data access?
- What successes have been documented and promoted from the past 12-18 months?

Moving Forward

As noted in the findings from this assessment, there are no other major funding prospects for data intermediary services in the Capital Region today. While this is a long term challenge for the region, the activities outlined in these recommendations are necessary to create a broader community and to generate outcomes that will attract additional investment. Moreover, each of these recommendations will create results that grow the data ecosystem in the Capital Region, and influence quality of life outcomes for its residents.

Moving forward requires a commitment by all stakeholders to support this work. Again, to move forward, Capital Region stakeholders next need to convene, discuss these recommendations in detail, agree to goals for the next 12-18 months, and agree to roles in implementation.

Interview List
Assessment of Need and Opportunities for
Data Intermediary Services in the Capital Region

Interviewee	Organization
Mary Crean	Achieve Hartford!
Rob Steller	Achieve Hartford!
Sandra Ward	Achieve Hartford!
Chris Brechlin	Blueprint for a Dream
Jim Boucher	Capital Workforce Partners
Lyle Wray	Capitol Region Council of Governments
Brett Flodine	City of Hartford, Metro Hartford Information Services
Sabina Sitaru	City of Hartford, Metro Hartford Information Services
Sheryl Horowitz	Connecticut Association for Human Services
Rich Pearson	Consultant to the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
Michelle Riordan-Nold	CT Data Collaborative
Bob Santy	CT Data Collaborative
Mark Abraham	DataHaven
Anita Baker	Evaluation Services
Jim Farnam	Farnam Associates, LLC
Nancy Benben	Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
Cyrus Driver	Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
Scott Gaul	Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
Chris Senecal	Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
Meher Shulman	Hartford Foundation for Public Giving
Elena Filios	Hartford Public Library
Richard Frieder	Hartford Public Library
Enid Rey	Hartford Public Schools
Orlando Rodriguez	Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission
Tyler Kleykamp	State of Connecticut, Office of Policy and Management
Rachael Barlow	Trinity College, Center for Urban and Global Studies
Jason Rojas	Trinity College, Center for Urban and Global Studies
Jack Dougherty	Trinity College, Professor of Educational Studies
Carlos Espinosa	Trinity College, Trinfo Cafe
Jen Gifford	United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut
Paula Gilberto	United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut