Leveraging Data in Decision Making for Local Governments: Webinar Transcript

November 15, 2022

Jie Dong: Good afternoon folks. Just want to welcome you to today's webinar. We're going to give everybody else a couple more minutes for them to join us, and the presentation will start momentarily. Thank you.

We'll give folks one more minute to join the webinar.

All right, let's get started. Good afternoon everyone. I'd like to welcome you to today's webinar, covering the topic of leveraging data and decision-making for local governments. This training is intended for local governments, especially those serving communities under 50,000 people and their partners. I'm your host, Jie Dong from BCT Partners.

Before we begin, I'd like to acknowledge the support from HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research and the Distressed City's Technical Assistance program that made this webinar possible. I'd like to also thank you for taking time away from your busy schedule to participate in today's webinar.

Next, I'd like to go over some housekeeping items. During today's session, we will ask you to use the chat box and function at the bottom right corner of the screen to import your questions, comments, feedback throughout the presentation. And during the Q and A session at the end, please direct all your questions and comments to all panelists. If you experience any technical difficulties, please send me a direct message so that I can help you troubleshoot the issue. We will also be taking several live polls during the presentation. Please follow the instructions on the screen to access Mentimeter on your mobile device or your computer to participate in the poll.

Now, I'd like to introduce you to our panelists. First, my colleague from BCT Partners, Ms. Annette Rodriguez, an experienced community engagement specialist who has experience and expertise working with seniors, families, children, and especially at-risk teens in the affordable housing setting. Next, my colleague, Dr. Miriam Sarwana, our in-house evaluation and data analytics expert who leverages her social science research background and justice and equity center approach to develop data analytics platforms and deliver solutions for our partners and stakeholders across the government, nonprofit, higher education, private and philanthropic sectors.

Without further ado, let's get into our presentation today. Here's the agenda for today. We're going to ground us first by sharing some of the common challenges and constraints folks typically experience in collecting data and using data to inform decisions. Next, we'll highlight the importance of understanding community context. Then we move on to discuss power of data and benefits of using data in the section called data-driven impact. Lastly, we will share some resources and industry best practices before we conclude by conducting the Q and A session.

Through the interactive nature of this webinar, we hope to capture information and insights from you directly to help us better understand how small local governments are collecting, storing, analyzing, and using data. By sharing the poll results in real time, we also hope to facilitate some peer learning. Ultimately, our goal is for you to take away ideas, resources, best practices that can further enhance your capacity and confidence in collecting, managing, and leveraging data for impactful decision-making.

So to help everyone get familiarized with the live polling process, we will now administer our first set of poll questions. Please go to menti.com on your mobile device or computer and enter the code 69878722 to access the first set of questions. I will now stop sharing the slide deck and show you guys the live results of the poll. Again, the code is 69878722.

Annette, would you mind putting the code in the chat for folks who are having difficulty accessing? Thank you folks. We'll give folks a couple more minutes to enter their input. Most folks who are participating indicated that they're somewhat comfortable with collecting community data. It's a great thing to see here. I see there's still movements, so we'll let folks take their time to do this.

Okay, seems like it stopped. Oh, not yet. One more popping in. I think we're going to advance to the next question here, all right, which is related to this first one here. All right, so the next question you're seeing on the screen now is, how comfortable are you with using community data for reporting? Again, it seems like most folks were participating indicating that they're somewhat comfortable with using community data for reporting.

All right, let's go to the next one, which should be the last one in this set here. How comfortable are you with using community data to make decisions? I'm going to leave the poll open and we're going to jump right into the slide deck. Bear with me here.

All right, thanks again for participating in that first set of polls. We're now going to cover some common challenges and constraints when it comes to

working with data. I'll pass the mic over to my colleague, Annette, to kick off this section with a brief vignette. Annette.

Annette Rodriguez: Thank you, Jie. Hello, and welcome everyone. Based on your responses to the previous poll question, we can gather that all communities collect and use data differently. Since this webinar is intended for local governments serving communities under 50,000 people and their partners, I'm going to show us an example of a city with a population of approximately 11,000 people that found a creative and effective solution to collect information by crowdsourcing vacant, abandoned and deteriorated properties.

Small local governments such as Fairfield, Alabama face many challenges, in particular, minimal staff and resources. But in 2020, the city of Fairfield, with the support of residents and other community members, crowdsourced the identification of over 200 vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated residential properties. Volunteers block-walked in groups, combining a visual inspection of properties from the street with local knowledge that residents had about whether they seen residents at a property or knew about folks moving away and no one currently occupying a residence.

This was the first and very important step to cataloging the scale of vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties in Fairfield. The city was able to build off of the qualitative data gathered by cross-referencing it with information on the usage of municipal utilities, and a review of the county's tax delinquency records to confirm whether properties were formally vacant, abandoned, or deteriorated, and to determine corresponding course of action for mitigation.

Now I will hand it back to Jie for another poll question.

Jie Dong: Thanks, Annette. We're now going to gather your thoughts on what type of challenges you're facing with collection, storage and use of data. So please hop back onto the poll question and input your answer. I'm going to stop sharing the slide deck and go over to the poll question again.

So the question here, which is open-ended, please describe some of the challenges you are currently facing with the collection, storage and/or use of data. This is very informative. Thank you. This is valuable input that will align with the rest of content in our presentation. I see some folks that are also working with HMIS data. I'll leave this here open so that you can continue to input your feedback and respond.

And we're going to hop back over to the webinar slide deck. One second here. I'm going to hand it over to my colleague, Dr. Miriam Sarwana. Miriam, why don't you kick off this section here.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: Thank you, Jie. And thank you so much for putting in, you know, kind of the challenges that you are facing. I'm going to address some of the things that we've seen through various kind of conversations that we've had, various projects that we've done. And actually I see, even looking at the responses that you all have polled in, that there's some that we can even add to here. So for example, a challenge that I saw come up a lot in your input was accuracy of data. And that is definitely something that we see as a challenge when it comes to collecting data, reporting it, analyzing it, et cetera. So I'll just go through some other ones. So we see that capacity constraints, as you all mentioned as well, can be a big challenge when it comes to utilizing data or collecting it at any form. And that includes things like not having equipment, technology to be able to collect this data, even in terms of labor availability. As we can see down here, there's lack of resources as well, and that can be things like human resources, financial resources, the technological resources themselves. There's also things like, you know, sometimes data is collected in a silo, so it's hard to have these community partnerships that help with bridging different data connections and data sources that actually people can be supplementing each other's work and collecting that data. We also know that there's limited data sources. So in that sense, not just, you know, enough people collecting the data, but also limited availability of knowing where to collect data from. There's also inconsistency in standards and practice. I think I saw a comment about that as well, that when you kind of think about who all is collecting data and how they're collecting it, even if people are collecting the same types of data, they might be doing it differently and that might be duplicating the effort and the work and the type of data as well. There's also varying degrees of expertise amongst staff and across business units. So in that sense, that might be a capacity-building constraint specific to who knows how to utilize the data or collect it effectively. And also, a big thing that we've noticed as well as a challenge is that large datasets, so datasets that are based on communities that are, you know, largely populated, that are based on kind of ZIP code or higher levels do not often reflect what is happening at the local level. So we have some ideas as to how some of those constraints at the very least may be at least able to be overcome or we can, you know, start to work on some of these challenges and address them in a different way. Jie, would you mind going to the next slide? So a couple of ways that we wanted to present to you all and kind of share with you in terms of, you know, the ways we suggest overcoming constraints is, number one, is, you know, with the idea that there is, you know, potentially capacity issues, sometimes it's hard to know what data needs to be collected, sometimes it's hard to know what data is out there, we suggest an internal environmental scan. And we see that works really well for people in the sense that they're able to understand where the connections are, who they might be able to have data access from, what data is available, what data quality looks like, "So is the data accurate," as you all were mentioning.

We see that seeking additional funding, of course, you know, that one's always easier said than done, but always applying for TA is a helpful one because in that sense you can build capacity, have people, you know, that you can decide who's going to be in charge of the data and have them build their capacity in terms of that TA perspective. There's also, you know, free or low-cost training opportunities in terms of various stages of the data collection to reporting process. You can kind of leverage some of those opportunities as well. We see that certain communities are also able to partner with educational institutions or research institutions that are attempting to evaluate or understand a specific issue and are able to partner to provide some support there in relation to the data potential expertise or even, you know, help with the data collection and help with understanding what data's even accessible and available. We also see that community residents and volunteers, once they understand what, you know, the goal is of collecting data and are able to really understand what the utilities of the data collection, are really helpful in pulling that, you know, process together and pushing the data collection and analysis forward. We also see that leveraging some of these peer learning and exchange opportunities, so not just in the sense of, you know, other individuals who are also interested in collecting data, but also people in the community, other stakeholders in the community who want to be able to measure their impact but are just, you know, trying to figure out how. So it's kind of creating that collective impact framework, is really helpful there as well. And finally, we would say set attainable goals and make some of this incremental progress in local data collection. So it doesn't have to be something where, you know, you have your question, that your big kind of evaluation question or big kind of question about what's going on in your community, answered immediately, but just kind of slowly working up to that by collecting more and more data and understanding how existing data even can be utilized for this function.

Jie Dong: Hey, Miriam, I did get a question in the chat.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: Sure.

Jie Dong: Yeah, someone is asking, "Can you give an example of the last bullet, large data set/small communities?" So I think-

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: Yeah, that's a great question. Yeah, absolutely. So I will say one, we're going to talk about some use cases in the upcoming slides, but one is that, you know, we've used American Community Survey data, which, you know, goes into and understands community context and demographics based on census tract. And we've definitely had conversations with individuals where they're saying, "While census traps is great, it's, you know, a nice micro kind of use of the data, it's not in the ZIP code level, it's not the county or state, but still we'd like to be able to get a little bit more local to understand what's happening in our various neighborhoods." So what we end up doing there is we can say, "Okay, well, let's understand a little bit about what services, let's say, are being provided in your communities and we can understand this specifically through, let's say, where businesses are located, where non-profit organizations are located." So kind of get down to an address level even not just, you know, a specific community level and in that way we can try to understand kind of the functioning of different, in this case, service provision within a community, within a neighborhood, within, like, on a street rather than, you know, something that can only go down to a specific community level, even if it is, you know, block grant or census tract level.

Jie Dong: Thank you, Miriam. All right, for the sake of time, let's move on to our next section. Here we want to highlight the importance of understanding community context, but then again we're going to take a poll to get your thoughts, all right? So this next poll is going to be on how do you collect data. I'm going to advance the poll question so folks can access the poll questions. "How do you collect data?" We're going to put this up, so that you can see the live poll results. Bear with me. And I believe the poll enables you to input multiple selection and choices. It's good to see that folks are actually having a balanced approach with both qualitative and quantitative data collection. Okay, I think the entry stopped. So I'm going to advance to the next poll question which is also connected here. "If you collect data from your local community, please select all applicable sources of data listed below." So we have businesses, community residents, community leaders, county or other government entities, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, healthcare service providers, and others. And if you check others, would you mind please drop that, specify your answer in the chat so that we can see, you know, what you meant by others in terms of the source of data. Database such as HMIS, thank you. Others may also include foundations, United Way. State or regional collaboration. NAR, real estate. Thank you, thank you. Emergency requests for service and responses, faith-based organizations. Okay, all right, so let's get back into our delivery. I'm going to leave this open. Again, you can still make your selection here, but we're going to

hop back to our slide deck. All right, here, Miriam's going to take us through how to leverage historical data. Go ahead, Miriam.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: Totally. Thank you, Jie. Yeah, so I know that, you know, we talked about, or asked the question of how comfortable everyone is with collecting data, I know we said we're somewhat comfortable. And so we wanted to talk about, you know, two different types of data that can be used and that can be leveraged. So one is historical and one is contemporary. We want to talk about historical data first, and how we can leverage kind of existing data and use that to understand a little bit more about our communities and what it is that we would like to measure and measure our impact. So one way in which we can leverage historical data is to kind of understand and take a snapshot almost of the condition and make-up of your local jurisdiction or your community. Understand, you know, what the important kind of, what the important, you know, services that are being provided there, what are the important functionalities that you need to pay attention to within your community? Communicate potentially the wins, the struggles, the losses of the community through historical financial data and funding data, understanding what resources are going to which community and to which, for example, service or resource. We also want to be able to identify, and we can identify, trends and patterns of economic and workforce development. So there's historical data such as, for example, the American Community Survey Data, while it is at the census tract level, it can still provide some insight as to what has been happening in the community historically and kind of what the community has looked like in the past. It also will help with looking at root cause analysis. So understanding the root cause of different problems that may have happened in order to identify what the appropriate solutions will be and kind of strategize effectively in that sense. It can also help and assist with forecasting. So understanding, "Well, this is what historically my community has looked like and now let me try to predict what that might mean for the future and let me try to figure out what that might mean for the sustainability of my community and how to promote, you know, what we can call, for example, community sustainability or community resilience to different, you know, different things that might happen, different disasters or recovery that is needed." We can now talk about contemporary data. So if you don't mind going to next slide, Jie. Thank you so much. So in terms of contemporary data, it's always helpful to see what data is readily accessible. There is data elements that you can consider, such as, for example, does your community have a market study or a land use strategy? So thinking about market and land use data. You know, what is in place related to disaster recovery and emergency management? So, you know, how is the community currently in terms of those different aspects of disaster recovery and what do you still need to

know? What do you need to know about kind of how the community has progressed and what the community is now able to be prepared for? Economic and workforce development. We talked about that one related to some of the historical data as well. So in this case, what is necessary for your community to be able to engage in economic and workforce development? And are you able to leverage existing data sources, such as funding information, such as information about jobs accessible, employment rates, et cetera, to be able to understand more about the economic development of your community? Financial well-being. This one we can understand through, you know, data that has already collected at the community level. So understanding more about, you know, what the financial health looks like of different departments, whether we're talking about kind of like the city, where different funding is going, things like that will help us understand better what financial well-being looks like. And if the community, and who in the community, is achieving financial well-being. We also have the consideration and the important kind of element of the affordable housing development and preservation. So does the community have ways to assess housing quality or housing stability? And what does it look like for residents to kind of be in this space? Are they able to receive affordable housing development or affordable housing easily, and is that kind of being promoted on a community level? And finally with public safety, there's a lot of this data that is also accessible, I'm not sure how easily depending on different communities, but it is accessible in terms of understanding what crime looks like in the community, you know, where resources are placed for ensuring public safety, you know, there's a lot of other aspects of this too, for example, like public recreation, public, you know, green spaces, et cetera. So understanding where there's already existing information, and some of that is just, for example, information about the location of specific resources in contrast where different groups of people are located. So you're able to understand really what's going on in your community in a lot of different ways. I'm going to next show you an example, and it's going to be of a case study, and we're going to talk through kind of what we've done for a group in Northwest Pennsylvania. So what we were able to do is use data collection and analysis as well as use existing data to assist this kind of workforce development and local government department in identifying different disparities and available resources within their community. So we were able to kind of work with both employers, job seekers, and workforce development agencies in the community to not only understand where support was needed, but also be able to use analytics in this case to predict where job growth was likely to occur specific to various industries in the community using historical data. So as we talked about earlier with some of the historical pieces. We were also able to use contemporary data. So actually able to look at, you know, where the highest priority occupations were, look at what job seekers were perceiving this context and not only just use some of this quantitative data, but use heavy

qualitative data and qualitative insights to understand where the greatest needs were and what job seekers felt like their kind of highest difficulties were in that community. So Jie, would you mind sharing your screen with that, and I can actually show some of the tools that we worked on for this?

Jie Dong: Sure, give me one sec.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: And by the way, I see, too, these amazing comments coming in, too, so we definitely want to make sure to address those. Awesome, so really quick, we'll just stay on this page for a quick second. So what we did in this case was we had a workforce report, which was leveraging contemporary data and insights from job seekers and employers in Northwest Pennsylvania, to understand what workforce needs were. And we have this workforce map on the right that was identifying communities that had the greatest needs. And I'll hop into both of them really quick. So Jie, if you wouldn't mind clicking on the workforce report, the visual there on the left? We can hop into that really quick. And we actually can just go right into diversity on that because that was something that utilized a lot of qualitative insights. So we were able to understand what's going on with, you know, leadership positions in the community, what people are doing to hire, retain, and developing various groups. But also, if you click the barriers to employment, we were really able to understand, by talking to job seekers and running focus groups because I see a lot of you selected those as tools that you use as well, to understand what was preventing job seekers from finding employment in this area, such as lack of transportation, they felt, you know, like living in rural communities kind of stopped them from being able to transport themselves and commute to the places that they needed to, their age and their kind of demographic factors too that they felt like, was really making them kind of have a hard time in achieving employment. So we're able to kind of take these conversations and bring it to these employers and the workforce development agencies just to help them understand what was going on on the ground. So that's kind of one aspect that we are able to do. And if we hop back, and we're just going to show you really quick what we're able to do with various communities in the area as well. So if we hop back into the first one, yes, perfect, that tab, and then we click the workforce map. So as you can see here, what we were able to do, and it's going to load one second, we were able to, this is going to produce a map of the Northwest Pennsylvania area, and each kind of box here on this map is a census tract. It's a neighborhood that we were looking at. And we were able to go to the industry level and say, so you see the educational services industry selected, so if you hover over, let's say one of the census tracts on the map, you will see that, yeah, so you'll

see that we were able to use publicly available data from the American Community Survey as well as industry-specific data from the American Community Survey and actual, you know, work stats data from Northwest Pennsylvania's like workforce development board to be able to come up with an assessment of this is what your community currently looks like, this is the community, kind of the forecasted growth that we would expect in this community as well. So kind of leveraging both these resources to identify what the communities were experiencing as well as where they may have been some struggles in the community based on what these, what the clients and the individuals we were working with really wanted to examine a little bit further. So that's a little bit of this case study related to, you know, workforce development and how we were able to use both contemporary data and historical data to answer this big question of what are these needs and what do we need to, or what do employers in this area need to do in order to ensure that the workforce is developing as well as the fact that job seekers are getting what they need.

Jie Dong: Thank you, Miriam. I know there are some comments and questions coming in through the chat so, at the interest of time, we're going to try to tackle simultaneously the next set of poll questions in the next session while you take a minute to look at the questions.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: Absolutely.

Jie Dong: Thanks. All right, so if we're moving on to the next section on data-driven impact, this is where we highlight the power of data and the benefits of using data, right? But first, again, we're going to administer the polls. "What is the collective data used for?" We want to hear from you all, you know, on exactly what the user case of the data that's been collected. So I'm going to advance the poll question. So, "What is the collected data used for?" Miriam, you're able to see the questions in the chat, right?

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: I am, yes, yes, yes.

Jie Dong: Okay.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: Just going to be answering them in the chat as well. So I know that Jessica asked about if the data that is being shared is publicly available. So we are able to go into, if you go to data.census.gov, you can just hop into all of their accessible datasets and see, you know, we always were interested in, for example, what's happening in the industries for different, you know, median earnings across different census tracks in different communities, so there's that data. There's data on employment, housing, poverty-related metrics, and, of course, HUD has a lot of datasets that are also publicly available and some of them even go down to the census tract level. So information about housing choice vouchers, you know, public housing units and different kind of housing-specific indicators that are, you know, you can bring down to a community level. So we find that there's a lot of data that's already out there that's probably available, but also of course, you know, really, really cool way to kind of connect with the data that you might already be interested in understanding your own communities and from your own kind of spaces that you're collecting that data.

Jie Dong: All right, I think there's a question regarding if one does not have Power BI, access to Power BI, what are alternative solutions for dashboards such as what we've shown here?

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: Yeah, that's a great question. So a great place to start in terms of, you know, kind of visualizing data, and I always think as a great way to start is like going to, for example, PowerPoint or Excel. Those are great places to start. By visualizing the data, you can, you know, generate charts and visuals in both. Power BI really is kind of like a similar framework in that sense where, you know, it uses all the visuals that are already accessible through PowerPoint and other sources and just kind of makes them automated almost, right, so you can kind of keep on feeding in new data to Power BI, which makes it nice. But you can do the same thing with PowerPoint and Excel. And you can also start to use Power BI, I know that there's like free trial versions, and it is generally more accessible than, for example, Tableau, but there are lots of different resources too that can be used for visualization. Like, for example, if you use a free survey kind of platform that collects data, and I think SurveyMonkey will ask for this as well, they'll sometimes kind of generate few reports for you just based on what you were collecting data on. So there's things like that, and Microsoft Forms says that as well. So you can start by almost, you know,

having these things that are built-in to platforms that you already have access to and then, of course, expand on that. And I see that someone just posted about CRAIG 1300, which sounds interesting. Laurie, would you mind telling us a little bit more about what you're using that for?

Jie Dong: And, Miriam, while you're engaging our attendee here, I'm going to move on to the next poll, mindful of the time that we have.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: Dashboard for community, awesome. Yeah, thank you, Jie, that'd be perfect. And so Laurie just shared with us, thank you so much, Laurie, a dashboard that, using mySidewalk, so CRAIG 1300 for mySidewalk, that makes visualizations based on publicly available info. So that's really cool. Thank you, Laurie. And I will say, too, once you hop in to, in a subscription service, so once you hop in to, for example, data.census.gov, they'll also show you kind ofa snapshot of what the data is looking like. And so with some of these sources, it's, you know, you're able to kind ofget snapshots and then you can go in, take the data that you're interested in, and then use something that's more free or accessible, like Excel or PowerPoint, to, you know, start to visualize that.

Jie Dong: Right, thank you, Miriam. The current poll that we're doing now focus on getting your input on describing an impact or decision made by leveraging data. Some of the examples that, you know, we often come across is things like construction of a community garden based on resident's input. So let's give folks a minute to input their answers here.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: And I do want to highlight one thing that Laurie brought up as well, which is Canva, which is great for, as you were saying, the infographic building, you can create brochures, you can create, you know, different media too to kind of, you know, communicate with your community. So that's a really cool space because I know that sometimes, you know, for people in the data world, it's hard to be like, "How am I going to communicate this out?" Once I have, let's say, come up with this great analysis or report of my data, how am I communicating it out in an effective way? And things like Canva are really nice because you can really make it visually appealing as well as ensure that it's accessible to the people that you're trying to share the data with.

Jie Dong: Thank you. Right, in the interest of time, I will get us back to the slide deck. All right, Miriam, take us away on the power of data.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: Awesome. So I'm going to talk more about kind of what we've used data for, what can it be used for in different contexts. So I know we talked about that community-based tool, but what is also really cool about what data can be used for, as I'm sure you all know, is understanding if we are making the impact that we want to in the way that we want to. So I want to show you this outcome generator tool that we've come up with, working with actually some HUD resources really quickly. And then that's going to be, and I see Jie is pulling it up. Thank you so much, Jie. So that is really what it kind of consists of, is we were able to understand, you know, what different metropolitan kind of housing communities were doing. So we were understanding, in this case, you know, these individuals were going in and helping the community in specific ways. They were providing economic empowerment services, they were providing health and wellness services, they were providing educational advancement services, and they were providing financial support. So in subsidies, you know, and housing vouchers, et cetera to their residents. And what they wanted to understand was if we take all this data, of things that we are already doing within our various communities, how do we understand whether or not we're having the impact, we're actually helping what they wanted to call promoting self-sufficiency for different residents. So understanding if self-sufficiency, you know, includes, for example, housing self-sufficiency indicate that they're no longer a housing resident or living with family and friends, or economic self-sufficiency, or they're attaining a job through their economic empowerment initiatives, or are they, you know, able to attain a high school degree or GED after kind of, you know, just going through some of the educational advancement services and support? So in that case, what we're able to do is we're able to use the data, and, in this case, they hadn't yet collected the data. So we're able to use the data that they were starting to collect and wanted to collect and use that to understand, "Okay, for each community that you're serving and even for each resident that you're working with, is what you're providing them in terms of services really impacting them and really helping them achieve self-sufficiency?" And what we were able to find is that, you know, if we were able to kind of bring all their data together, we were able to show, well, this person, this resident in this community needed more in health and wellness, they needed more health and wellness services and they had actually received quite a lot of financial support, but they needed more support in these other areas to really get to a point of being self-sufficient. So in this case, we try to understand everything that's important and just

kind of bring in all the available, all the possible data that could be available to answer their questions. That's really what you're seeing here just kind of in a nutshell. So we can hop back into that slide. So with the power of data, now thinking about that, what that really shows us is that that slide deck, as you can see, was talking about those specific, you know, services that they were providing and that helped us understand exactly what is helping people, specific individuals as well as various communities. We were able to transform, you know, their data that they were hoping to generate into knowledge for them. So insights both on a service provider level, like someone's on the ground who's actually doing this work, as well as someone who's on a programmatic in a space and they want to be able to understand, you know, "What do I need to keep on, you know, putting funding and money and, you know, resources towards?" And it becomes more than this reporting and metrics tool. So it actually helps with, you know, promoting further impact. So not just measuring impact, but promoting that so that can keep on moving forward and keep on going. It actually can influence, you know, what's happening on the ground in terms of service delivery. And it can actually kind of do some prediction so it can understand, you know, what might be useful in the future based on what information is already present and what historical information has been provided. So as you can see it has, you know, they had data on these four different services and on their outcomes that they wanted and then through that it became something much bigger. So we found that to be, you know, that really illustrates kind of like the power of data and influencing, you know, things on the ground and on higher up levels too.

Jie Dong: Thank you.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: Thank you, Jie.

Jie Dong: Let's go on to the benefits of using data.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: Perfect. So I mean, I think I've covered a lot of benefits just to some of our conversation, but I'm just going to lay some of them out here as well. So as we talked about, so some of the benefits of using data are that it really helps with making these community level decisions. I know we talked about, you know, things like, you know, the contemporary data slide we

talked a lot about, you know, market and land use, you know, financial well-being, affordable housing quality, public safety, et cetera, so in that sense we can impact the areas that we're most interested in impacting by understanding the effectiveness of what we've done in the past. We can also strategically deploy resources, too, to the communities that need them, to the individuals that need them. And we can actually ensure that we're better delivering the public services that we are already deploying and already delivering. So we can make sure that, you know, let's say based on the fact that this person lives in this community, this neighborhood, we see that there's a lot of, you know, green spaces accessible, there is a lot of, you know, grocery stores accessible to them. So we can say in this community we want to promote those existing services, but what else do we need to get this community to the next level? So we can understand a little bit more specifically there. We can say we can harness power of technology, we can reduce cost, we can connect the data, and we can leverage that data. So what we can really do is we can really craft this narrative, and this is a narrative based on our own community, so everyone has their own community that they're servicing, and we can really understand what is going to promote the sustainability or even, you know, keep promoting the sustainability. because sustainability exists, we're going to say, "Let's just keep this community sustainable and let's make sure that our long-term impact is well kind of researched and of course well-supported by the things that we're already doing." Thank you, Jie. The next slide, please. So this is kind of another case study that we have. We're going to just go through it really quick. This is just another one where we ended up helping the local government representatives understand the neighborhoods that had the greatest needs. So I'm not going to go through it too much because it's kind of similar to what we did for the last one, for the Northwest Pennsylvania one.

Jie Dong: Thank you, Miriam.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: Thank you.

Jie Dong: All right, so this takes us to our final section of the webinar. Before we do the Q&A, we want to share some practical resources and best practices with you all.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: Absolutely, yeah. So I'll hop into this one really quick. Again, I want to tell you a little bit about the data tools and resources that are available. And I know we've talked about them in different contexts, such as historic and contemporary data, but specific data that we can in fact leverage and collect are, for example, in-house data. So I was talking about the financial data earlier, such as budgets, such as information about any permits that are, you know, being administered, citations, programs that have been, you know, administered in various communities or implemented. That's always really useful. Sometimes even, you know, what we always talk about is, like, even just knowing where, you know, in which community which address something was administered or something happened is a great source of data. We also think that it's important to have access to an awareness of the types of data that are easiest to collect. I was just looking at, you know, what you all were talking about in terms of the types of data that you're already collecting and your sources of data and I know it was, there's a lot of public records, you all talked about public surveys and focus groups, I think, were the three biggest ones, and I think archival data was another big one as well. So in that sense, you're already aware of the types of data that are easiest to collect data from because you're already doing it. And we always kind of say, too, it's important to have this qualitative data because that is really the foundation for how you kind of move forward and how you even know if you were to do quantitative data collection where you would target and how you would target it. We also utilize existing datasets such as the IRS-90 data, which is nonprofit organizational data, community data. We can use crowdsourcing platforms, which Annette talked about earlier, as the vignette that she mentioned. We can use open-source data platforms that are, understanding more information about the geography and the satellite kind of information too that's available. And of course, as I talked about, we can use some of these accessible or easy to access platforms like PowerPoint, Excel, even Power BI, if it's accessible, to create, Canva as Laurie mentioned, to create some of these basic data visuals to start to share the data so that it almost becomes like this relationship that you are creating between what it is that you're collecting and who it is that it's impacting. Next slide, please, Jie? I believe I'm going to pass it to Annette for this one.

Annette Rodriguez: Thank you, Miriam. So Miriam provided some practical tools and resources that local governments can begin to implement. There are additional resources available that can help you establish long-term goals and guide your capacity-building process when it comes to using data. So here we have an example of trusted resource that demonstrates how data can strengthen local leadership, innovation, and collaboration skills. The Bloomberg Cities Network is open to individuals, and government

innovation programs, and any city leader or staff who share commitment to data-informed decision-making, collaboration, and resident engagement. So one of the initiatives of the Bloomberg Cities Network at the What Works Cities program was launched in recent years with the goal of helping 100 midsized American cities enhance their use of data and maximize impact. The program helped cities prioritize data over other pressing challenges and build city staff skills and capacity to be able to take on the data work. So guidance and coaching is provided to city leaders who demonstrate readiness to drive the work in their local government. So in this example, Minneapolis is one of the 23 cities to achieve the 2021 What Work Cities Certification, which is a national standard of excellence for well-managed data-driven local government. In this article in particular, you can see how Minneapolis, a Green Cost Share program was launched by the city's Department of Health as an incentive-based way to reduce pollution and address climate change. So leaders of the Green Cost Share program collected data on dollars invested, estimated lifetime energy bill savings, and pollutants reduced. The improvements will help the city move closer to achieving its climate change goals, while also addressing public health inequities. And the city tracks and communicates progress made through a dashboard presenting all of the metrics. So Minneapolis, I'm sorry, just before we move over to the next slide, Minneapolis has also other foundational practices as well, including general management and data governance, all of which help the city's efforts to monitor and utilize relevant data. Next slide, please. So here we want to highlight that smaller cities can leverage the use of data and decision-making as well. In this example, the city of Evanston, Illinois utilized performance and analytics to expand its youth and violence prevention programs. Evanston employed a qualitative approach and was able to yield great results in reducing youth violence by focusing on outreach and engagement with young people. In partnership with local non-profit organizations, programming was tailored to residents' interests based on continuous data collection. The city staff conducted focus groups, asking young people what programming should look like and they also did surveys via text, held town hall meetings, and created an idea board and suggestion box where young people can share their thoughts. Next slide, please. So similar to the previous resources shared, govlaunch.com showcases innovative case studies and solutions nationally and globally. These are two of many examples provided where local governments are getting creative with data and are improving the way they operate. In addition to case studies, you can also learn more about specific tools and products that drive innovation in local communities. So we strongly urge you to check out some of these resources on your own time. Now I will turn it back over to Miriam to share some industry's best practices.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: Thank you, Annette. Perfect, so I'm going to talk about a little bit of what the best practices that we've seen through just working with different stakeholders in this space. And of course, Annette's examples of local governments successful using data is I think one of the biggest ones that we want to pay attention to, how local governments are using data and in what ways they're able to leverage existing resources to really add to the data that they're looking for that helps understand their impact. We want to be able to understand the complexities of data collection. We've seen that here, just in terms of what you all answered, specific to the different types of data you're collecting, the different resources that you're using to, you know, participants, et cetera, to collect data from. Be transparent about what you're trying to measure. That helps not only with the communication of reporting, but also ensures that you are able to really dive into the exact metrics or, you know, the data types that you're interested in collecting. It helps you be super focused about it as well. We see that it's important to make the data exchange mutually beneficial. So share the data, report out on it, be able to show and find out ways to kind of communicate the stories that the data is telling as well, of course, is, you know, using that to build up your own data sources, using crowdsourcing, et cetera. Safeguard your data. So that is an important one because what we see is that a lot of times there's sensitive data that might be collected, especially in community levels. So understanding how to protect the data, encrypt it, et cetera, ensure that the data is not breached. You can also do something with, you know, for example, if you have different people collecting all different types of data, you can establish a data trust that is both, you know, ensuring the data is safeguarded, but also ensuring that someone is there to kind of keep the data in one space, that there's data sharing agreement so everyone's not duplicating their efforts because you want to make sure, you know, you all are busy enough already, you don't want to keep on having to collect the same types of data in different spaces. Knowing the regulations. There are certain cases in which collecting data for research requires some, you know, OMB submissions or other processes, IRB, so there's some of these resources that you want to be like, "Okay, what is it that I need to collect this type of data, this type of research data," or let me just kind of, you know, have the process ready in advance so that by the time I need to report out I am ready to go and have the timeline figured out. And of course, as you all mentioned related to data accuracy, ensure the data quality. So get the data in a format that's consistent and that can be combined with other data sources. Know what level you want the data. Is it on a community level? Is it on a person-by-person level? And are you able to connect that to all the other data sources that you have access to?

Jie Dong: All right, I know we are short on time, but would like to take any questions that you may have at this moment. Feel free to drop your questions and comments in the chat so our panelists can help answer them. And, you know, we may not be able to answer all of your questions due do time constraints, but we certainly follow-up with you individually after the webinar to provide clarification and additional information, if needed. I'm going to ask Annette to drop her email address in the chat now so that you can also email us directly following the webinar. If anything is not clear or you need additional information about anything that was covered today, you can get in contact with us directly. Yes, the slides will be available on HUD Exchange at a later time along with the recording of this webinar.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: And I love what Laurie's put in the chat as well, is that she said, "If local fire departments are doing community risk reduction, they may already have good snapshots of vulnerable populations in the community," which is a really great idea too. So as Laurie's showing us, reach out to resources that might already be collecting the type of data that you might be interested in too. Absolutely. That's a great recommendation, Laurie.

Jie Dong: Yes, thank you, Laurie. Just as a next step and part of our closeout, we'd like to find out if you would be interested in learning more about these listed data related topics. We can certainly develop and deliver additional webinars based on your feedback provided here. So again, please use the chat function to indicate your interest for the listed topics. Many of you are indicating that you are interested in all of them. Interested in all, mentioned all of them. Thank you. Thank you. Analytics tools. Okay.

Dr. Miriam Sarwana: Thank you, everyone.

Jie Dong: I want to thank you everybody for participating in today's webinar. This presentation and recording will be made available via HUD Exchange at a later time. If you have any questions regarding the content we shared today, please feel free to follow-up with us by emailing my colleague Annette Rodriguez. Annette, I believe you've dropped your email address in the chat. If you're interested in learning more about the HUD Distressed City Technical Assistance Program, you can access the webpage listed on this slide, which, again, will be made available later on HUD Exchange. For additional questions about the TA program, feel free to email

Distressed Cities at hud.gov. Thank you again. And this will conclude our webinar today. We wish you well in your future efforts in serving your communities.