



Unlocking the Value of Data Sharing

A LOOK ACROSS FIVE SECTORS



Quick Summary

Multi-sector collaboration requires us to go beyond what is comfortable and familiar. This short paper introduces you to a basic method for reaching out to those in your community who may share your interest in collaborating and sharing data. We walk through three basic steps for this outreach and provide questions to guide your conversation (starting on page 5):

1. Do your homework: who should you talk to?
2. Reach out and listen: what do they care about?
3. Identify value: what's in it for us?

You don't have to answer every question along the way; you just have to get started.

This paper outlines the process of discovering the value of multi-sector data sharing initiatives. We are following this introduction with a series of short sector-specific papers; the first is on health and housing. The series of papers and associated materials is available at:

www.dashconnect.org/value



**Data Across
Sectors for Health**

The Power of a Multi-sector Approach



It is impossible for one short paper to distill and define all of the ways that multi-sector data sharing efforts can create value for all types of organizations. The complexity and nuance of each sector or stakeholder differs remarkably based on the state, community, market drivers, and culture. Instead, this overview and framework is a starting point that can be adapted to local efforts and can serve as a springboard for conversations with a specific set of stakeholders or potential partners within a community. The Data Across Sectors for Health (DASH) National Program Office has documented lessons learned from awardees

that have been successful in engaging partners across sectors to share data. Many collaborations are actively looking to bolster early successes in engaging partners and are interested in expanding their leadership by reaching out to additional sectors and stakeholders. Knowing your audience (i.e., what is important to them, the incentives that they are operating under, the level of infrastructure, constraints, etc.) will help your collaboration craft a successful and productive outreach strategy, strengthen your partnerships, and ensure ongoing sustainability by clearly defining and articulating the value of sharing data across sectors.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was written by Peter Eckart, DASH co-director at the Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI) and Katherine Browne, principal at Constellation Consulting, and edited by Anna Barnes, program manager at IPHI, and Jenna Frkovich, communications manager at IPHI. It reflects the collected experience of DASH co-directors, Peter Eckart and Clare Tanner, with specific feedback from participants of the *All In: Data for Community Health* National Meeting, held in April 2017.

ABOUT DATA ACROSS SECTORS FOR HEALTH (DASH)

DASH, led by the Illinois Public Health Institute in partnership with the Michigan Public Health Institute with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, supports alignment among health care, public health, and other sectors to systematically compile, share, and use data to understand factors that influence health and develop more effective interventions and policies. DASH assists collaborations that seek to improve the health of communities, promote health equity, and contribute to a Culture of Health by strengthening information sharing, engaging additional sectors, and building sustainable capacity. DASH and its partners in *All In: Data for Community Health* are creating a body of knowledge to advance this emerging field by identifying and sharing opportunities, barriers, lessons learned, promising practices, and indicators of progress for sharing data and information across and beyond traditional health sectors.



Overview

What makes communities and individuals healthy is much bigger than health care. It goes beyond the doctor's office or hospital to where people live, work, play, pray, and learn.

“
Be kind,
for everyone
you meet is
fighting
**a hard
battle**

”

—PLATO

Everything about where we live — from neighborhood characteristics to the air we breathe — has a substantial impact on our health. To get a complete picture of what makes individuals and communities healthy or unhealthy, it is critical to consider all the factors that contribute to health — many of which are associated with different sectors and organizations, and can be revealed through data they collect and share.

There is broad agreement that in order to make individuals and communities healthier, we must expand the lens beyond health care to involve other sectors like social services, public health, housing, and education. An expanded understanding increases the capacity of organizations, community members, elected officials, and other local leaders to plan, develop, and support programs and policies.

Across the country, organizations are coming together to form collaborations that are committed to improving the health of individuals and their communities. Multi-sector collaborations are knitting together data from multiple sources and hold extraordinary promise for transforming the health of communities across the country.

However, breaking down entrenched silos and uncoordinated workflows across sectors and organizations is a complex effort that requires harnessing individual and political will, focusing resources, and leveraging the assets of partners. It requires time to build relationships that result in the kind of trust that is the foundation for meaningful collaboration. Successful data sharing collaborations result from partner organizations committing staff time, funds and in-kind resources to build relationships. There are no shortcuts.

DEFINITIONS

Shared data and connected information systems

Data derived from a wide range of sources, including raw data, aggregate data, summary data, and administrative. Connected information systems include, but are not limited to, health information exchange, bilateral data bridges, shared access to a data warehouse, and integrated data from multiple sectors. For more information, read [DASH's Health Care Data 101 primer](#).

Collaboration

Multiple organizations engaged in ongoing and systematized operations, to address problems that cannot be solved by individual institutions acting alone. A collaboration can be an existing multi-organization partnership with a shared venture or a stand-alone entity that operates for or on behalf of community collaborations.

Multi-sector

Intentional collaborations working across boundaries and in multi-organizational arrangements, typically including health care delivery, governmental public health, social services, housing, education, transportation, community safety, community development, physical environment, and business/employment. These sectors, which are representative of the social determinants of health, deepen our understanding of the health of communities and provide additional avenues for action.

Defining the Value of Sharing Data



In this environment of limited funding and resources, multi-sector collaborations must be able to sustain and scale their data sharing efforts to become ongoing, viable assets for their communities. Economic sustainability requires that collaborations diversify revenue away from an over-reliance on grant funding and toward a financial model that reflects that partners and users will pay to support it.

Defining and demonstrating the value to the partners who are working to advance the flow of data across sectors is a key to ensuring sustainability.¹

It is a worthwhile — and necessary — activity to define value (or the potential benefits) through multiple perspectives.

The term “value” has multiple definitions and dimensions. For the purpose of this overview and the subsequent sector-specific papers, value should be thought of broadly and expansively. Given the variety of perspectives and incentives that each sector, stakeholder group, organization, and individual brings to this work, it is helpful to consider value from economic, financial, operational, and altruistic vantage points. All of these, and probably more, are legitimate lenses that are not mutually exclusive. It is a worthwhile — and necessary — activity to define value (or the potential “upside”) through multiple perspectives.

Assessing the value of multi-sector data sharing efforts is not easy. Outcomes can be difficult to quantify and often, the benefits accrue to stakeholders/sectors other than those that made the investment or implemented the intervention in the first place (i.e., the “wrong pocket problem”).² Community partners are dedicated to their mission and vision, but in an environment where there are competing priorities and limited resources, there must be a compelling “upside” to this work. Value must be created, captured, and shared or efforts will fail to gain traction. **To be blunt, the question of “what’s in it for me” has to be answered.**

It is critical that partners in a collaboration be explicit about how the value of multi-sector data sharing efforts will be seen and felt by the different organizations around the table. That “upside” will vary between different sectors, stakeholder groups, and organizations. It will also be realized at different times during the initiative’s life cycle. Thus, it is helpful to address:

1. What is the value?
2. Who is reaping the benefits?
3. Are the benefits different in the short-term versus the long-term?

There is a broad body of literature, resources, and tools that address stakeholder analysis, power mapping techniques, and deliberate influence strategies. The following questions are not an extensive “deep dive” or strategic assessment, but may assist collaborations in gaining a general sense of the sector/ organization.

SECTORS VS. STAKEHOLDERS

We are using “sectors” to describe segments like housing, health care, education, transportation, social services, etc. “Stakeholders” refer to specific types of entities or roles within a particular sector. For example, within the housing sector there are a number of different stakeholders, including residents, public housing authorities, homeless shelters, homeless management information systems, etc.

1 Do Your Homework— Who Should You Talk To?

Understanding key stakeholders is a basic tenet of any good communication, marketing or outreach strategy. Identifying the details (the more specific the better) that pertain to the particular organization to be engaged can help demonstrate that you’ve taken time to try and understand what is important to them. Doing this basic research can also build a common understanding and insight across your existing coalition members about potential community partners. Most of these questions can be answered with simple online searches. For a selected set of sectors, DASH is publishing short papers to get you started with basic information about the value case for collaboration and data sharing. See www.dashconnect.org/value for the list of current papers in the series.

- What are they responsible for (i.e., what are their goals or day-to-day responsibilities)? Note that this goes beyond the organizational mission statement – hospitals may be firmly committed to advancing the health of their community but their day-to-day pressures may be more related to managing relationships with the physicians and medical staff, ensuring regulatory compliance and mitigating risk.

- What kinds of resources or assets do they have (e.g., staff, money, influence, relationships, non-cash resources, etc.)?
- What are the types of organizations in this sector? Who are their major competitors or collaborators?

TIP: It may also be worthwhile to conduct research on multiple organizations in a sector of interest (for example, all the major health plans which are operating in your market) before identifying which one to have a conversation with first. Who you approach can sometimes send a strong signal to others in the community.

- What has been their historic involvement in multi-agency collaborations and data sharing activities? Are they involved with initiatives that compete with or complement your goals?
- What kind of technology infrastructure do they possess (e.g., high, medium, or low level of investment and capacity)?

2 Reach Out and Listen— What Do They Care About?

The questions above are basic fact-finding questions. Below are more nuanced questions that can help craft a strategy and frame early discussions and outreach efforts.³

What do they want to accomplish that they cannot do on their own?



“

If you
want to go
fast,
go alone.

If you
want to go
far,
go together.

”

-AFRICAN PROVERB

Understanding the enablers or barriers to sharing data, investing financial or human capital, or changing workflows is vital to bringing and keeping organizations at the table. As you consider these questions, remember that one individual's impressions may not represent the whole organization.

- Generally, what motivates them personally and on behalf of their organization?
- How does the organizational culture show up in its external relationships? Are they generally open to collaboration, suspicious, or demanding of a measurable return on the investment of time or resources? Is community leadership important to them?
- What financial or emotional interest do they have in the outcome of your work?
- Where does their income come from? What generates their funding, revenue or financial health?
- Are there potential benefits that could be realized by collaboration or data sharing?
- Are they subject to government oversight or regulatory authority? How are they judged or evaluated? What parts of their system or environment are beyond their control?
- What are the biggest challenges they (as an industry or organization) are facing? What are the pain points?
- What would success look like to them? What value or benefit would they see? What would be evident in the short-term and what would emerge in the long-term?
- What do they want to accomplish that they cannot do on their own?

TIP: This is simple, but everything springs from it: you must understand what people are saying to you, which means checking in with your new colleagues about their common terms, jargon, and slang. We have no “universal translator,” so we have to ask each other: what do you mean when you say that? For example, case management means something different for police officers and social workers. Acronyms are even worse; ATM means something different for bankers and physicians. Don't be afraid to ask for explanations when listening and keep an eye out for confusion or glassy stares when speaking.

3 Identify Shared Value— What's in it for Us?

It's not bad to recognize that most people and institutions operate based on their own interests. In fact, if you are able to discover activities that satisfy multiple interests, you are more likely to attract people to those projects. Understanding a potential partner's background, their day-to-day realities, and the challenges they face will enable an honest appraisal of a collaborative project that appeals to you and your potential partners. This framework can act as a prompt to think about where and how value is being created and which organizations or sectors are benefiting from sharing data.

Value can be realized in a number of ways (fiscal growth, improvement of outcomes, external recognition) and from a variety of perspectives (e.g., patient/family, staff within the partner organization, the organization as a whole, or the broader community). Value may also grow and vary over the life cycle of an initiative, so it's important to think about it both in the short-term and long-term.

TIP: It can be helpful to approach the value of multi-sector data sharing efforts from two angles. First, if they were **successful**, how would partners feel a difference in their day-to-day positions or roles? Second, if a collaborative data project were **unsuccessful**, how would that affect staff, patients, or organizations?

It is important not only to define value, but to recognize that organizations outside the collaboration may realize benefits as a result of collaborative efforts in which they are not participating. It can also be helpful to think about what other entities would reap some of the downstream benefits; e.g., employers might have a workforce that enjoyed higher productivity or presenteeism because family members spent less time coordinating services for a loved one.

- What could both of us learn about our work or community that we do not know now?
- How would both organizations benefit from combining our data in some ways?
- What could you help them do by working together?
- What issue is so significant in our community that we can't tackle it alone?
- Who else should we talk to about sharing data in our community?

“

Most people do not listen with the intent to **understand**; they listen with the intent to **reply**.

—STEPHEN R. COVEY

”

Wrap Up: Two Important Encouragements

Before you begin, ask these same questions of yourself and your organization

This may be obvious, but before you reach out to potential partners with the questions in this paper, you should have these conversations within and about your own organization. You may think you know the answers, but it's helpful to talk with others in your organization, especially those in leadership positions. Furthermore, you will need to be able to communicate your own values and drivers to someone who may not know your language and your jargon, so think of your interests in terms that your partners can understand and appreciate.

Instead of asking someone to join your effort, consider offering to co-create something new

When we first consider multi-sector collaborations, we naturally think of who can help us advance our own agenda. But as you approach potential partners, you must expect that they are thinking about collaboration from their perspective. Part of the conversation might be about what you are hoping to do with their help, but you should expect to be approached about how you can advance their work. Honest and meaningful conversations will eventually reveal opportunities that organically reflect the shared interests that you are discovering together. This may take years and may be the result of multiple successful or failed projects. They will emerge if you are building meaningful and trusted relationships.

What's Next in the Series

The papers in this series (available at www.dashconnect.org/value) will provide guidance for making the value case to five different sectors. These papers focus on a single type of stakeholder from within each sector (i.e., within the health care sector, the focus is on hospitals). Each paper addresses the following components:

1. General background on the sector
2. Important drivers and concerns of the sector (e.g., financing, incentives, accountability, competitors, etc.)
3. What's in it for the sector and potential value creation

These sector-specific papers attempt to provide a framework, systematic approach, and illustrative examples to better understand the incentives, challenges, and benefits of data sharing initiatives for partner organizations.

Each paper covers one sector and a specific stakeholder within that sector (in parentheses):

1. Housing/homelessness (public housing authorities)
2. Health care (hospitals/integrated delivery systems)
3. Social services (food banks)
4. Criminal justice (police departments)
5. Public health (local health departments)

REFERENCES

- 1 www.rethinkhealth.org/the-rethinkers-blog/the-universal-difficulty-but-not-impossibility-of-sharing-data
- 2 Erickson D. Health and Community Development. Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. 2014.
- 3 Alex Osterwalder's book *Value Proposition Design* frames this issue as understanding the target audience's "job," their pains, and potential gains.

Connect with your peers

***All In: Data for Community Health* is a learning network of communities across the country that are testing exciting new ways to transform health through multi-sector partnerships to share data.**

All In: Data for Community Health helps communities build capacity to address the social determinants of health through multi-sector collaborations working to share data.

All In is led by five partner initiatives, including DASH, who joined forces to coordinate technical assistance for communities, foster dialogue across sites, and cultivate peer-to-peer activities for those tackling common challenges. Collectively, *All In* includes 100+ local collaborations. Join the [All In online community](#) to learn how others are making the value case to other sectors to share data for community health improvement.

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