Centering Racial Equity Throughout Data Integration

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Penn
Social Policy & Practice
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

AISP's Niche

We help state and local governments collaborate and responsibly use data to improve lives. We convene a peer network of 44 integrated data systems focused on strong data governance and routine use of cross-sector data for the public good.

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What We Do

Peer Network

Guidance & Standards

Training & Consultation

Advocacy & Communication

Actionable Research

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We are singularly focused on the ethical use of public sector data.

And in the US that means centering racial equity.

Those of us committed to racial justice, democracy, and mutual well-being know that safety does not come from hatred; it comes from solidarity with all who yearn for a world centered on mutual care and concern
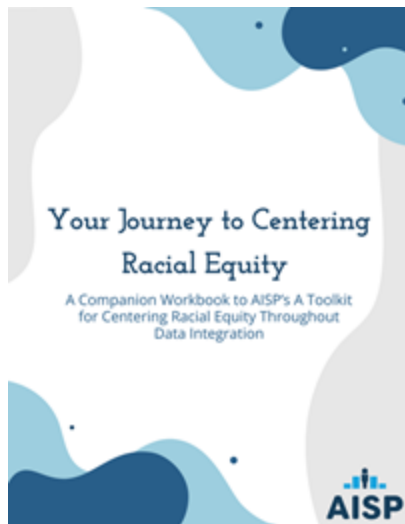**Tema Okun**

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Hawn Nelson, A., Zanti, S., Jenkins, D., Algrant, I., Rios Benitez, J., et al. (2025). A Toolkit for Centering Racial Equity Throughout Data Integration. Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy, University of Pennsylvania.
https://www.aisp.upenn.edu/centering-equity/

Hawn Nelson, A., Algrant, I., Lewis, B., Jenkins, D., Paull, K., et al. (2025). Your Journey to Centering Racial Equity: A Companion Workbook to AISP's A Toolkit for Centering Racial Equity Throughout Data Integration. Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy, University of Pennsylvania.
https://www.aisp.upenn.edu/centering-equity/

Where: aisp.upenn.edu/centering-equity

What:

- Positive and Problematic Practices for using data at each stage of the data lifecycle
- Works in Action
- Activities to get you, your team, & your partners started in a companion workbook

What stages of the data life cycle is your work focused on?
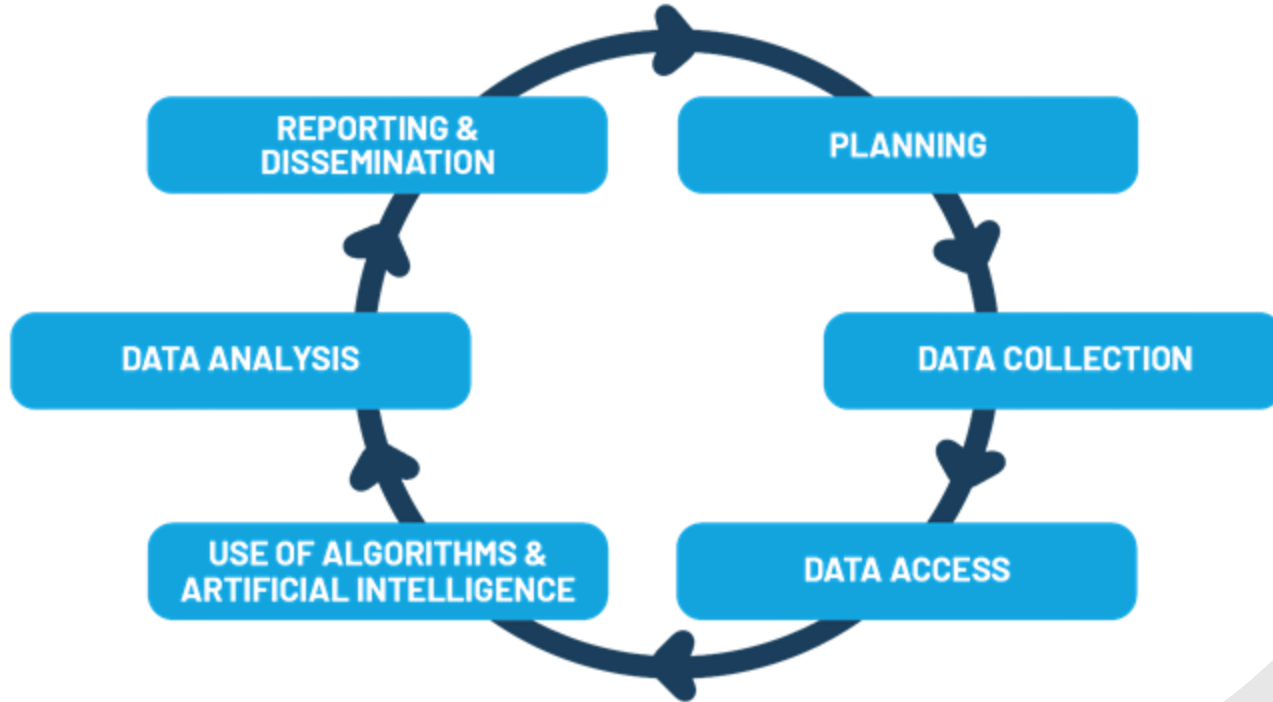
As railroads and highways both developed and decimated communities, so too can data infrastructure.

We can co-create data infrastructure to promote racial equity and the public good, or we can invest in data infrastructure that disregards the historical, social, and political context.

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Process

2017-2018
- Expressed need from AISP network sites
- Initial Funding from AECF
- Created Workgroup

2019-2020
- Secured funding for Toolkit
- In person workgroup meetings
- Writing, editing, & review
- Release & dissemination of V1 Toolkit

2021-2022
- Document shifts in site-based practices
- Learn and share and shift
- Secure funding
- Planning and beginning EiPLC

2022-2024
- Planning, curriculum, and resource creation
- Cohort 1 of EiPLC completed TA (Nov 2024)
- Convened Toolkit Workgroup V2
- Selection and start of EiPLC Cohort 2
- Data + Equity Summit #1 (2024)

2025-2026
- Toolkit V2 and Workbook in the wild!
- All the presentations and discussions
- Cohort 2 of EiPLC completes TA (Nov 2025)
- Data + Equity Summit #2 (2026)

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A TOOLKIT FOR CENTERING RACIAL EQUITY

2025

110 CONTRIBUTORS:
25 workgroup members
73 work in action authors
12 AISP team members
1 external reviewer
2 graduate students

54 WORKS IN ACTION
7 long-form case studies on participatory governance
23 different states represented
7 national initiatives & 1 international organization

86 HOURS AND 15 MINUTES OF MEETINGS
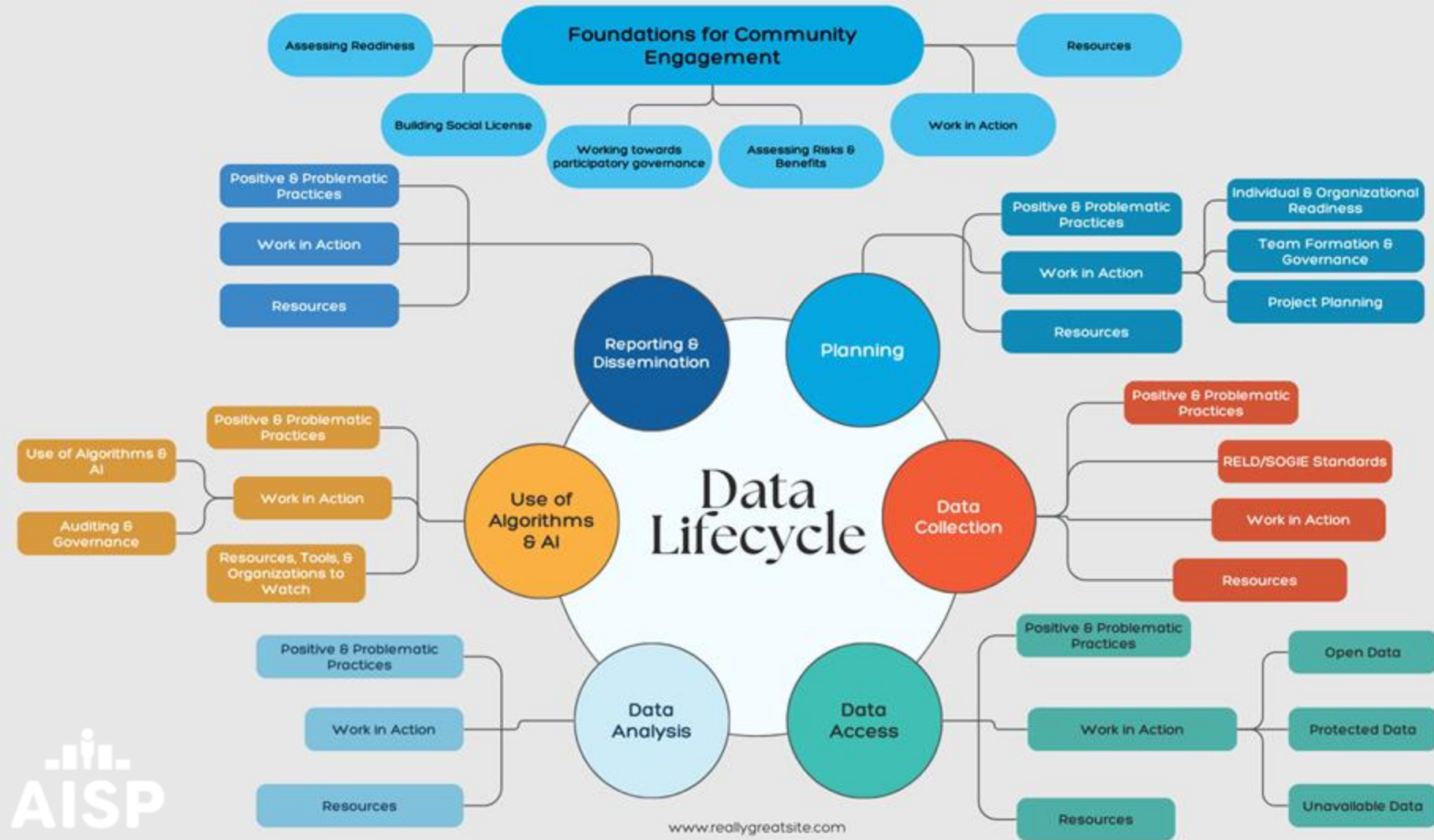This is about 3.6 full days of meetings, including our workgroup and subcommittees, and 14 hours and 45 minutes of work in action meetings. This is a gross undercount based on calendars, not counting phone calls, the number of people in each meeting, and independent writing time.
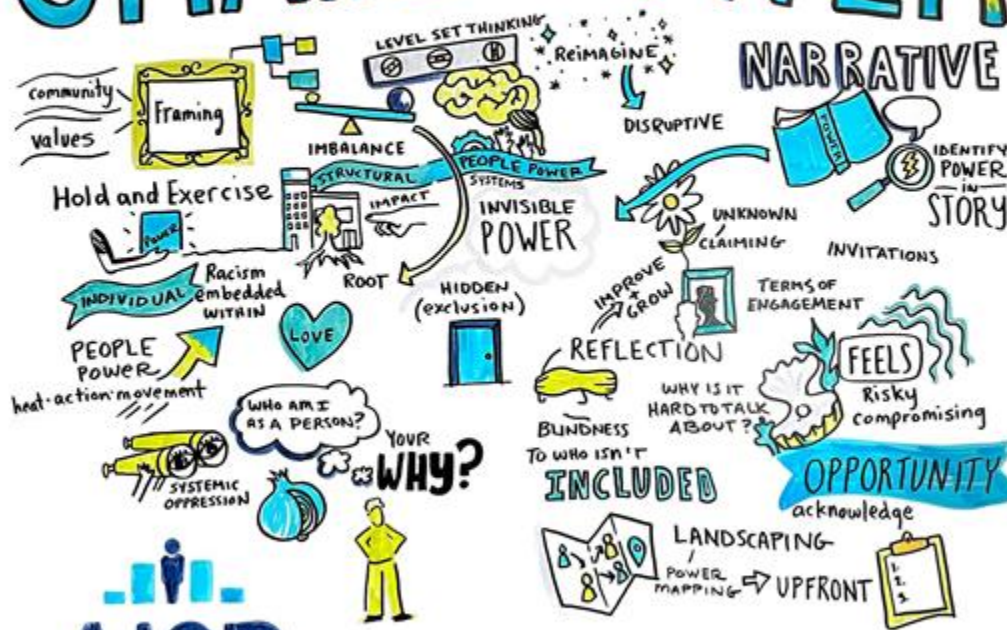
743 WORK IN ACTION EMAILS
This is DEFINITELY a gross undercount, but it gives you the idea.

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Foundations for Community Engagement
- Assessing Readiness
- Building Social License
- Working towards participatory governance
- Assessing Risks & Benefits
- Resources
- Work in Action

Data Lifecycle

Reporting & Dissemination
- Positive & Problematic Practices
- Work in Action
- Resources

Planning
- Positive & Problematic Practices
- Work in Action
- Resources
- Individual & Organizational Readiness
- Team Formation & Governance
- Project Planning

Use of Algorithms & AI
- Positive & Problematic Practices
- Work in Action
- Resources, Tools, & Organizations to Watch
- Use of Algorithms & AI
- Auditing & Governance

Data Collection
- Positive & Problematic Practices
- RELD/SOGIE Standards
- Work in Action
- Resources

Data Analysis
- Positive & Problematic Practices
- Work in Action
- Resources

Data Access
- Positive & Problematic Practices
- Work in Action
- Resources
- Open Data
- Protected Data
- Unavailable Data

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www.reallygreatsite.com

A Vision for Building SHARED POWER

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Equity in Practice Learning Community Convening
OCTOBER 5, 2023

Updates

There is an Interactive website!

Companion Workbook

The Workbook is filled with activities which are a great way to start centering equity in your data work!

Foundations for Community Engagement

Prepare organizations to bring community in… It's not always the right choice

Tribal Data Sovereignty

What considerations need to be made when working with Indigenous, American Indian, Alaska Native, and/or Native American Communities

Artificial Intelligence

Given the MASSIVE changes since 2022, we have updated Algorithms and Statistical Tools section to AI and Algorithms

https://www.aisp.upenn.edu/centering-equity/

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Foundations for Community Engagement

Not every organization is ready to bring community in

This section focuses on:

- "getting your house in order" before bringing community partners in
- preparing community partners so they can participate effectively
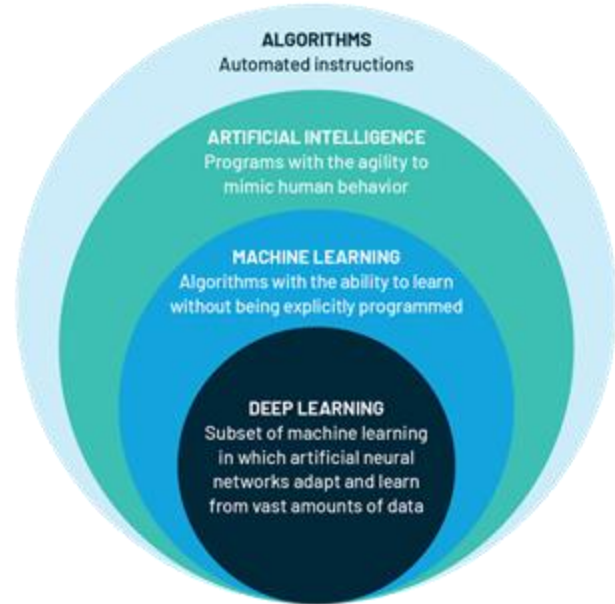- advice for course correcting, reconciliation, and repair

Tribal Data Sovereignty

Recognized Tribes (a complicated statement in itself) have certain unique rights, permissions, needs, and (rightful) skepticisms. This section aims to explain some of the practices to working with and within these communities without infringing on their sovereignty.
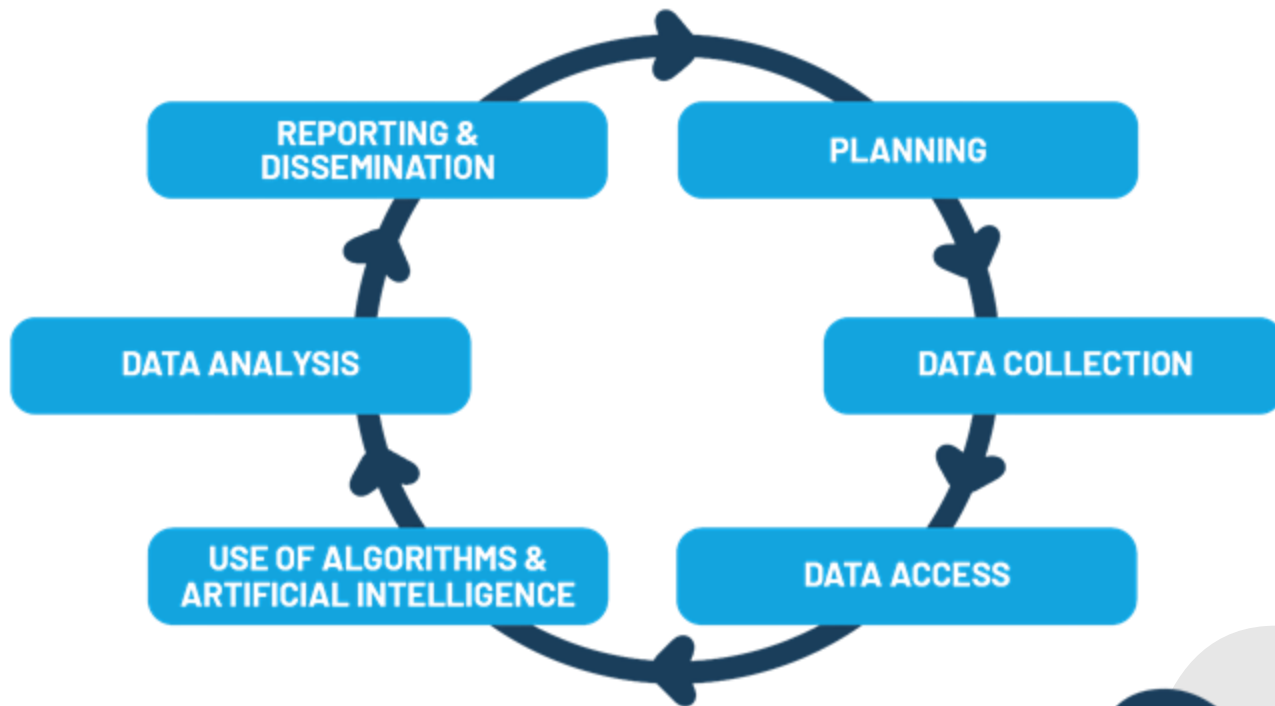
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Algorithms & Artificial Intelligence

With the recent availability of AI tools, this chapter considers engaging with these tools intentionally:

- having clear governance
- disclosing AI use
- never using AI punitively
- remembering that no algorithm is neutral

ALGORITHMS
Automated instructions

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
Programs with the agility to mimic human behavior

MACHINE LEARNING
Algorithms with the ability to learn without being explicitly programmed

DEEP LEARNING
Subset of machine learning in which artificial neural networks adapt and learn from vast amounts of data
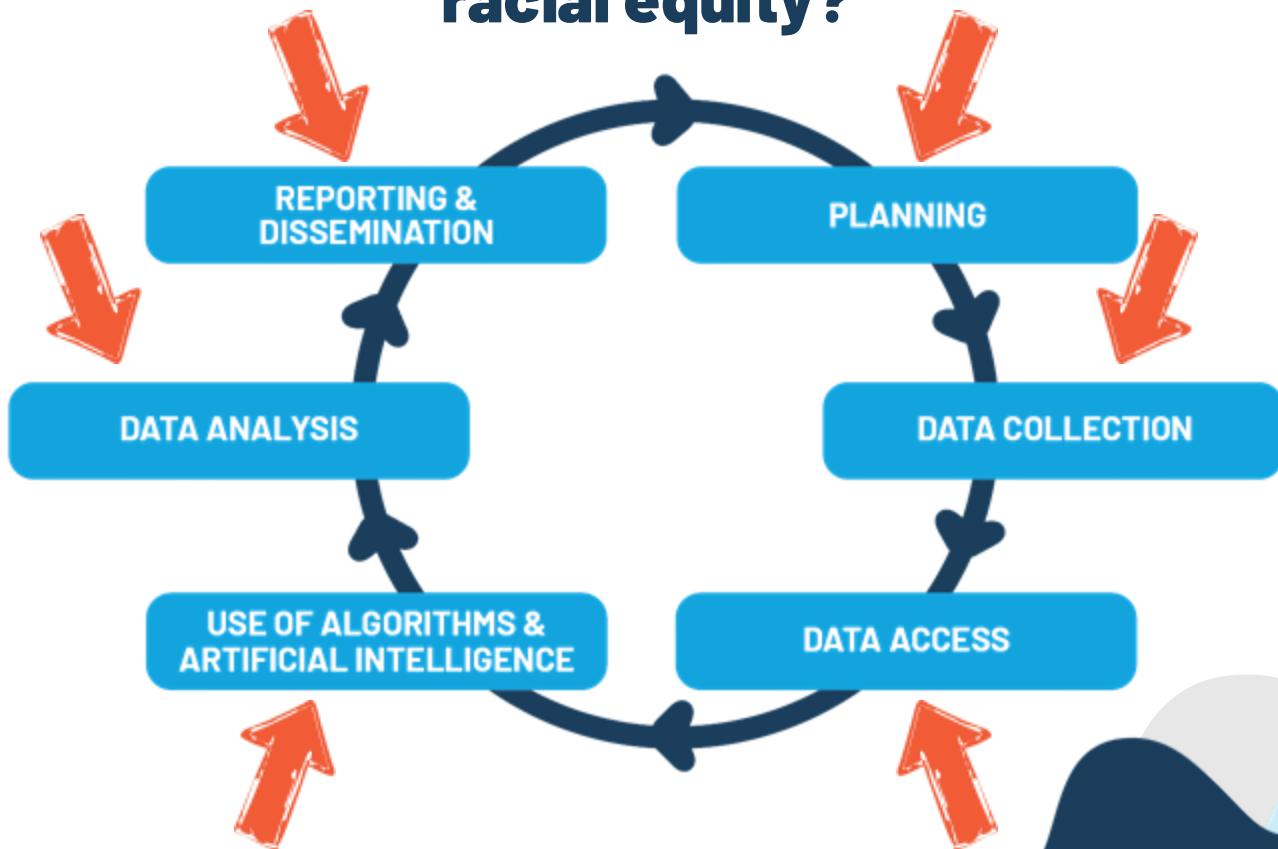
Graphic used with permission under CC BY-ND 4.0. Vrana, J. & Singh, R. (2020). The NDE 4.0: Key Challenges, Use Cases, and Adaption.

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Where do we need to center racial equity?

REPORTING & DISSEMINATION

PLANNING

DATA ANALYSIS

DATA COLLECTION

USE OF ALGORITHMS & ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

DATA ACCESS

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Where do we need to center racial equity?

Biggest Takeaway?

Whether you're a data owner, a data steward, a
data custodian, a caseworker — no matter where
you are, there is something you can do, today,
to center racial equity.

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Questions?

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Subscribe to our newsletter: https://aisp.upenn.edu/sign-up-for-the-aisp-monthly-newsletter/

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Time Permitting

The Four Questions

Spoiler alert: this is data governance

Is it legal?	Is it ethical?	Is it a good idea?	How do we know? Who decides?

See: Finding a Way Forward: How to create a strong legal framework for data integration, https://aisp.upenn.edu/resource-article/finding-a-way-forward-how-to-create-a-strong-legal-framework-for-data-integration/ and Four Questions to Guide Decision-Making for Data Sharing and Integration, 2023, https://ijpds.org/article/view/2159
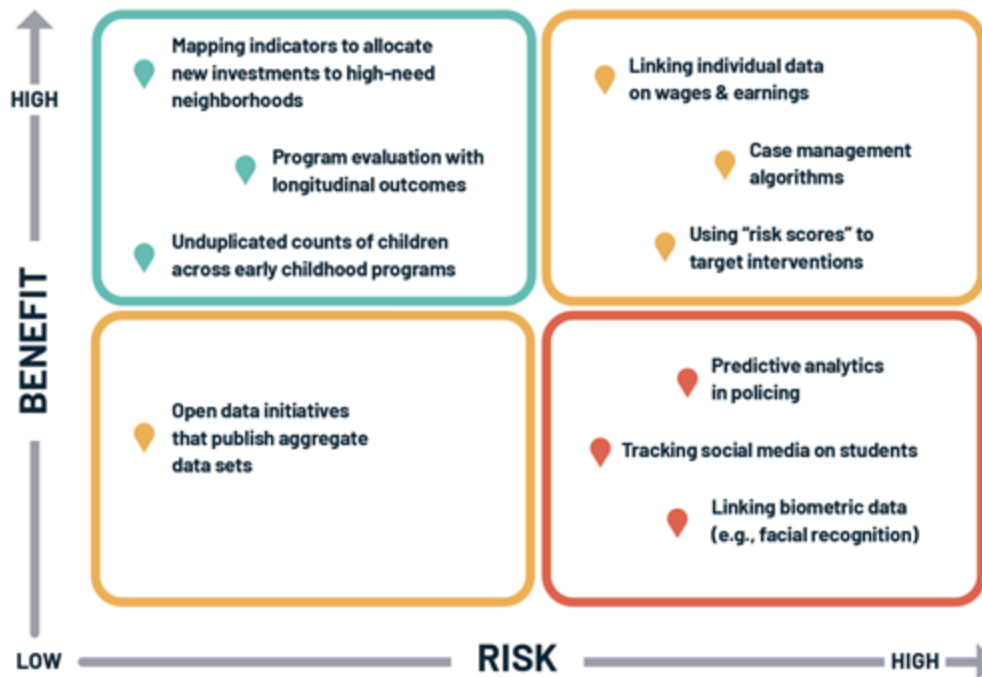
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1. Is this legal?
AUTHORITY AND ACCESS

Establishing the Legal Authority

- Authorizing legislation for agency/department
- Executive Order
- Policy/Rule
- Contracts
- Legislation specific to use

Open Data	Protected Data	Unavailable Data
Data that can be shared openly, either at the aggregate or individual level, based on state and federal law. These data often exist in open data portals.	Data that can be shared, but only under specific circumstances with appropriate safeguards in place.	Data that cannot or should not be shared, either because of state or federal law, lack of digital format (paper copies only), or data quality or other concerns.

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2. Is this ethical?
SOCIAL LICENSE, RISK v. BENEFIT

A four-quadrant matrix with BENEFIT on the vertical axis (LOW to HIGH) and RISK on the horizontal axis (LOW to HIGH).

Top-left (High Benefit, Low Risk):
- Mapping indicators to allocate new investments to high-need neighborhoods
- Program evaluation with longitudinal outcomes
- Unduplicated counts of children across early childhood programs

Top-right (High Benefit, High Risk):
- Linking individual data on wages & earnings
- Case management algorithms
- Using "risk scores" to target interventions

Bottom-left (Low Benefit, Low Risk):
- Open data initiatives that publish aggregate data sets

Bottom-right (Low Benefit, High Risk):
- Predictive analytics in policing
- Tracking social media on students
- Linking biometric data (e.g., facial recognition)

3. Is this a good idea?
DATA AVAILABILITY, RESOURCES, ACTION

Is there available data to answer this question?

Do we have the resources to respond to the answer?

Can these data be acted upon?

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4. How do we know? Who decides?
DATA GOVERNANCE

The people, policies, and procedures that support how data are managed, used, and protected.

Strong and inclusive data governance for cross-sector data sharing and integration should be:

- Purpose-, value-, and principle-driven
- Strategically located
- Collaborative
- Iterative
- Transparent

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Language spoken at home (other than English)
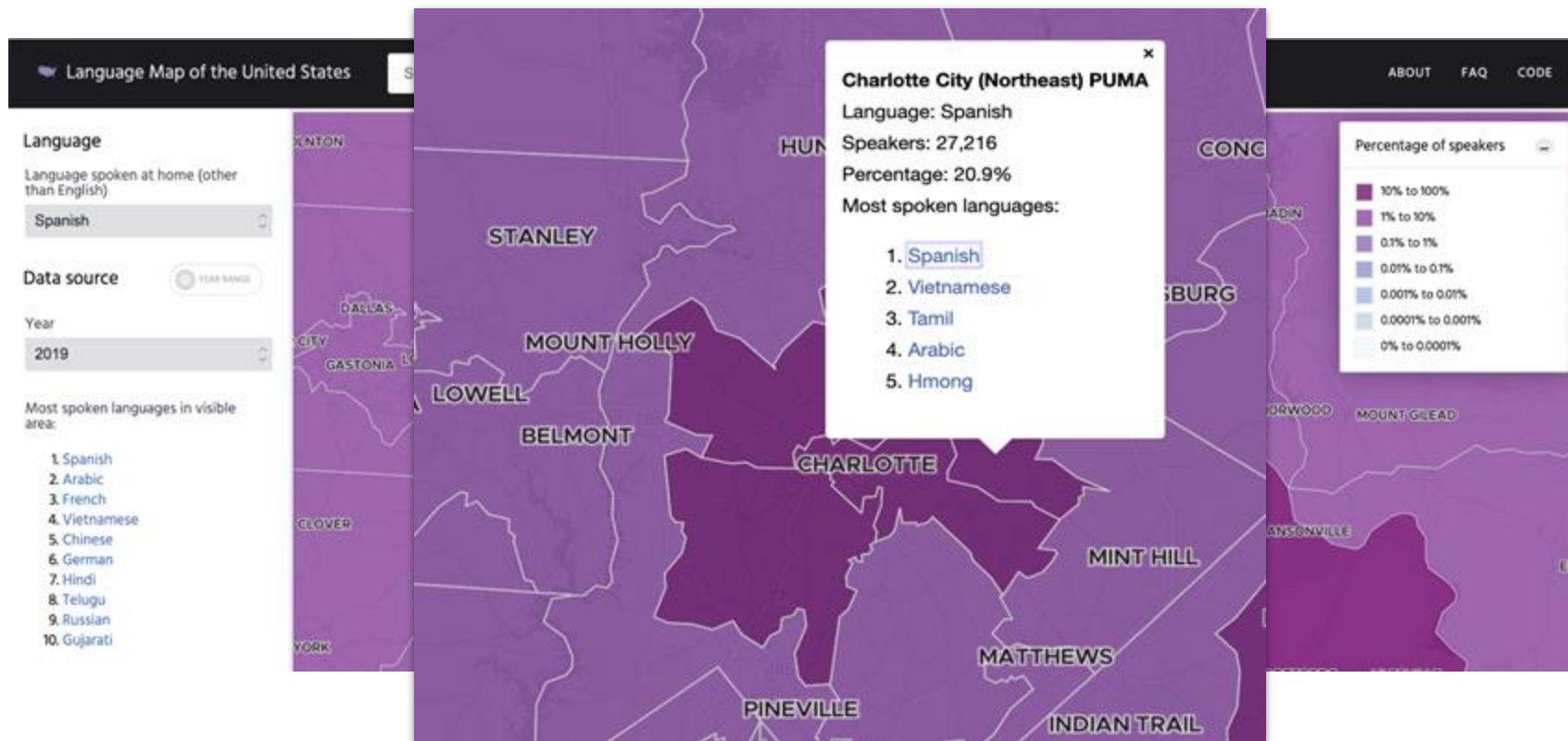
Positive & Adverse Childhood Experiences

Exhibit 3. ACE and PCE Questions Asked in the National, NJ, and Newark 2021 YRBS

Category	Construct	Question	New Jersey	U.S. and Newark
ACEs	Exposure to community violence	Seen or heard community violence		✓
	Racial/ethnic discrimination	Treated badly/unfairly because of race/ethnicity	✓	
	Sexual minority discrimination	Treated badly/unfairly because of sexual orientation	✓	
	Sexual violence	Forced to do sexual things	✓	✓
		Sexual experience without giving consent	✓	
		Physically forced to have sexual intercourse		✓
	Teen dating violence	Dating partner physically hurt you	✓	✓
		Dating partner forced you to do sexual things		✓
	Bullying or harassment	Bullied at school		✓
		Electronically bullied	✓	✓
	Food insecurity	Go hungry; Not enough food in home	✓	
	Homelessness	Usually have place to sleep	✓	✓
PCEs	Supportive adult	Talk to a caring adult about your feelings	✓	
	Parental monitoring and structure	You and parents/guardians ate dinner together	✓	
	Belonging at school	Feel close to people at school		✓
	School and community engagement	Sports team participation		✓

https://www.chcs.org/media/Preventing-Adverse-Childhood-Experiences-and-Promoting-Positive-Childhood-Experiences-in-NJ.pdf

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Thanks

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