

Workshop Series

During the Governance Workshop led by the Public Science Collaborative (PSC), participants from the Community Action Network (CAN) learned about the benefits and drawbacks of governance plans and began discussing preferences for a plan for the network. The results of the facilitated conversation included the documentation of ideas on a potential governance structure for CAN (including a hybrid of association-led and state-led model), as well as the identification of key stakeholders to include in the planning process (e.g., agency leaders, association leaders, state leaders, and DUG members). Participants highlighted the need for a plan to solve data inconsistencies, better understand client needs, minimize duplication and data errors, increase compliance with government regulations, and improve confidence in data-related decisions and strategies.

Governance is a system that supports collaborative and strategic decision-making and sets standards for best practices around data.

What is Data Governance?

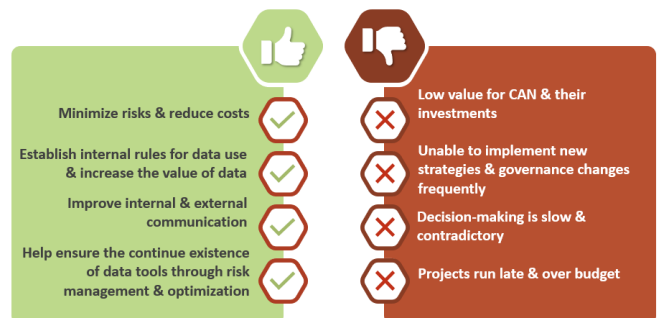
Governance is a set of policies, processes, and protocols to support decision-making. This system codifies who does what, when, and where. Effective governance reduces costs and improves internal communication around data needs. It also establishes the roles, responsibilities, and resources of key stakeholders. The Public Science Collaborative shared examples of governance structures in other states comparing association-led, state-led, and outside entity-led models.

Discussion

PSC then guided the discussion around governance needs with CAN using a series of anonymous Mentimeter questions followed by discussion:

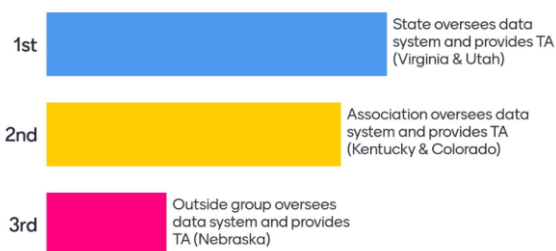
- *Is a data governance plan needed for CAN?*
- *Which data governance benefits matter most?*
- *Which governance structure is most appealing?*
- *Are any data governance approaches non-starters?*
- *Who should be involved in governance discussions?*
- *Any last thoughts you would like to share on data governance planning?*

Good Governance vs. Bad Governance



Iowa's Community Action Network leaders were unanimous in asserting they needed a data governance plan. When discussing why governance was needed, the most commonly cited reason for developing a governance plan for Iowa's Community Action Network was to improve confidence in data being used in reports and to drive more effective decision-making. In follow-up conversations, several participants shared they lacked confidence in their reported data. State and local participants shared that data quality problems directly affect program funding, staffing decisions, and performance outcomes, and it was critical to address these issues promptly. Participants also identified the benefits of governance as providing new opportunities for local agencies to conduct impact analysis, explore data insights locally and across agencies, reduce costs by minimizing duplications and errors, and to better understand clients. Participants also noted modest support for improving data privacy and security, increasing transparency in roles, responsibilities, and access, and helping align efforts. Many of these themes have been reoccurring in previous discussions with CAN members and directly reflect the need for a governance structure to support decision-making around ongoing data concerns.

Which governance structure is most appealing?



There was a fairly even divide among leaders about whether the state agency or Iowa's Community Action Association should lead the data governance efforts, with little interest evidenced in using an outside group to oversee the data system and provide technical assistance. Numerous people shared enthusiasm for a potential collaborative structure that shares leadership between the state and the association. As noted by one participant: *"Let's look for the best hybrid data governance system to meet our needs that include the state, state association, and local agencies."*

Overwhelmingly, participant responses described outside entities as non-starters for reasons such as a third party would be *too cumbersome, overly complicated, too far from the day-to-day work, and could not see how it could be advantageous* as it would *require additional time to bring people up to speed*, and may result in a slower process with *too many cooks in the kitchen*.

It was stressed to the participants that every organization has different needs, and it is ok to create a unique governance model adapted to be the most beneficial for Iowa's Community Action Network. **Pursuing a mixed governance structure model was an important first step in advancing a governance structure to support CAN's success.**

One participant shared that *the Community Action Association was an underutilized resource in data management*, and it could be of *greater benefit to the network and be more intimately involved and impactful in managing and reporting data*. A second participant noted that they *wanted the local agencies' private non-profit status at the forefront of decision-making* to minimize areas of confusion.

Concerns was shared that *the network might become a quasi-government agency* if agencies ceded data control to the state. As one participant noted: *"I am nervous about blurring the lines between the state and the agencies. Our clients may not be comfortable with the state having access to all their information."* Another commented: *"Autonomy and data privacy and security for the people you serve would be very high value in a data governance structure."*

One participant reminded the group to *draw on potential assets already at hand*, noting we should start by asking agencies if they already have a data governance plan in place, and if so, could they share with the others what is working well for them?

Others suggested *combining elements from the state and the association, with shared responsibility for software development and use and data collection and use*. To this end, a participant asked if PSC could share additional examples around a hybrid model- *including how it was structured and organized, how it functioned, and if there was room for creativity to customize what would be best for us*. Pursuing mixed leadership in governance structures, where state and association leaders can help provide support and access data for decision-making and planning, was considered a high priority.

Who Should Be Involved?

Almost any structure chosen will engage a variety of stakeholders. Groups commonly included in governance development include the steering committee, data stewards, and data owners, each with specific roles and responsibilities in the governance process. CAN leaders recommended also including agencies (12 mentions), ICAA (7 mentions), the State or State Leadership (10 mentions), DUG (2 mentions), and Users (6 mentions).

Last Thoughts from Participants

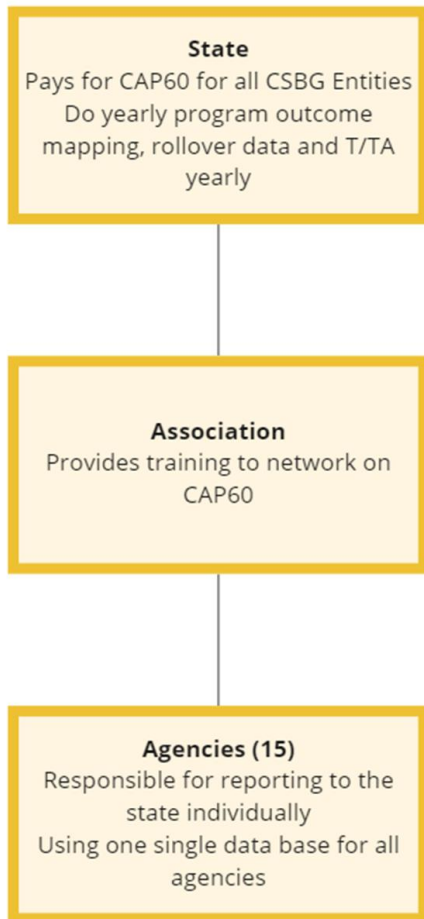
The Public Science Collaborative asked participants if there were anything else they would like to share to support the planning of a CAN data governance system. Participants said securing clients' data privacy should be a driving motivator for any new governance structure. Additionally, the appeal of being able to creatively build a hybrid structure to meet the needs of those involved and to make the data more useful was commented on by multiple participants as key to a successful data governance plan for CAN.

Governance Examples

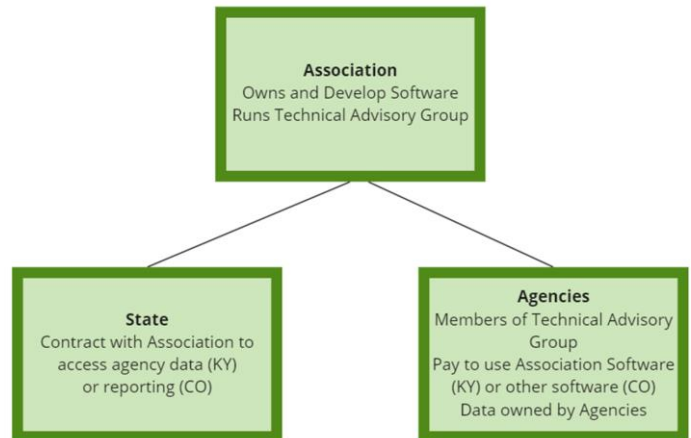
Every organization's governance model is different.



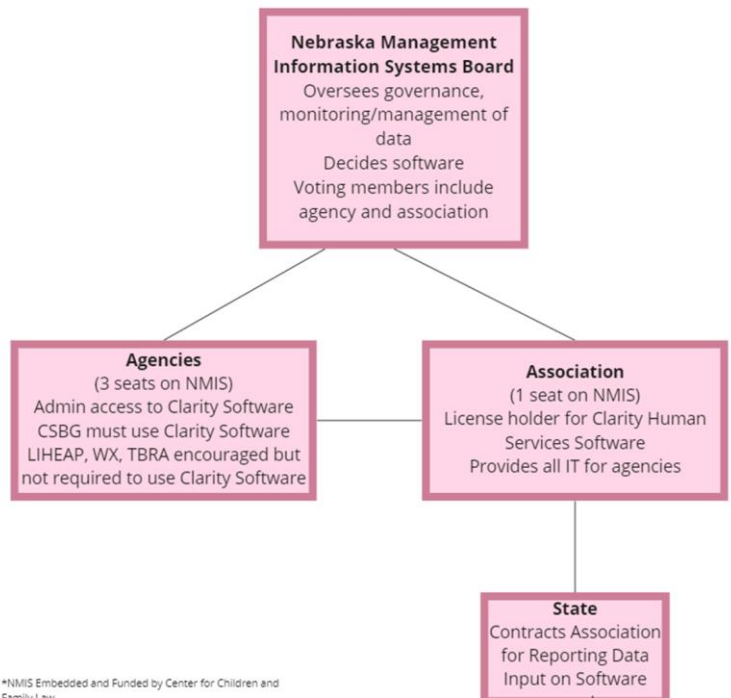
Wyoming



Kentucky and Colorado



Nebraska



Example governance systems for Community Action Agencies in various states with leadership provided by Associations, States, and Third-Parties

*NMIS Embedded and Funded by Center for Children and Family Law

Additional Reading:

What is a Data Governance?

<https://www.sap.com/insights/what-is-data-governance.html>

By definition, governance of enterprise data encompasses the policies and procedures that are implemented to ensure an organization's data is accurate to begin with – and then handled properly while being input, stored, manipulated, accessed, and deleted. Data governance responsibilities include establishing the infrastructure and technology, setting up and maintaining the processes and policies, and identifying the individuals (or positions) within an organization that have both the authority and responsibility for handling and safeguarding specific types of data.

Data governance is a key part of compliance. Systems will take care of the mechanics of storage, handling, and security. But it is the people side – the governance organization – that ensures that policies are defined, procedures are sound, technologies are appropriately managed, and data is protected. Data must be properly handled before being entered into the system, while being used, and when retrieved from the system for use or storage elsewhere.

While data governance sets the policies and procedures for establishing data accuracy, reliability, integrity, and security, data stewardship is the implementation of those procedures. Individuals assigned with data stewardship responsibilities manage and oversee the procedures and tools used to handle, store, and protect data.

Benefits of Data Governance

<https://www.cloudwards.net/what-is-data-governance/>

Goals of Data Governance

<https://www.egnyte.com/guides/governance/data-governance-framework>

Data Governance Models

<https://nttdata-solutions.com/us/blog/data-governance-models-%E2%94%82four-models-and-how-to-choose-which-is-best-for-your-organization/>

Why You Need a Data Governance Model

<https://nttdata-solutions.com/us/blog/inside-data-governance-part-1-an-introduction/>

Demonstrating the Value of Your Governance Plan

<https://datagovernance.com/demonstrating-value/>

Additional Reading:

5 Tips to Create Your Data Governance Plan

<https://www.sap.com/insights/what-is-data-governance.html>



Think with the big picture in mind, but start small

If you're starting from scratch (and have never had a data governance process in place), you're breaking new ground. It's always prudent to start small – test out your ideas and understanding in a limited way to learn, develop skills, and validate the approach before committing to the whole effort. At the same time, keeping the big picture in mind is important. It's too easy to get wrapped up in the minutia and stray from the overall objective. So, document the high-level goals of your project (what your data governance process will look like), carve out a modest piece that can be your pilot test area, and validate your approach through this “pilot” test.

Appoint an executive sponsor

As with all cross-enterprise projects, it is important to secure an executive business sponsor to be the champion for the data strategy. They will actively advocate and communicate the strategy to the broader organization...enforce accountability, model the desired data mindset, and help arbitrate data issues between business units.

Build a business case

Data governance systems don't come without cost. Even though there is no special equipment required to develop the framework and fill in the details, there is still work to be done – and that will consume resources, especially employee time. The business case should contain a high-level description of the project, a statement of the goals and objectives, expected benefits, and a schedule with milestones and measurements (indicators) of progress and success...The business case reminds team members of the reasons you're doing this project and why it is important to...get it done right and on time.

Develop the right metrics

Measurement is essential but more is not always better. Even when automated, measurements do take time and effort; someone has to look at results, interpret them, and perhaps take corrective action. Too many measurements – or measurements that are not meaningful – can be counterproductive... a manageable handful (typically six to 10) of useful and meaningful measurements is much better than 50 or 100 that don't provide much insight into how systems are functioning and whether objectives are being met.

Communicate

Most people have an inborn aversion to change based on fear of the unknown – but the best remedy is information. Be open with those who will be affected by the new processes and procedures, whether they will be active participants in the process or not. Explain what you are doing and why...Involve those who will be most impacted in the planning and implementation of the new procedures.