LESSONS LEARNED, MOVING FORWARD

Advancing Information-Sharing in California and Beyond
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Hack to the Future
Progressing from ‘That’s Not Possible’ to ‘What Data Can We Share?’

“Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision. . . . It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.”

– Andrew Carnegie

Those of us who think the word “interoperability” should be part of everyone’s everyday vocabulary (you know who you are!) often focus on acquiring two things to achieve that important objective: the right tools and the knowledge with which to effectively use them.

In principle, those do indeed seem like the correct core components for making collaboration and information-sharing routine and successful. In practice, however, there’s another piece of the puzzle that we too often overlook, or at least don’t pay enough attention to, and that is organizational culture. It’s one of the many reasons why, historically, so many silos were created in health, human services and virtually all other domains. And it remains a major reason it’s so hard to make quicker progress, even though we now have many excellent tools and a broad array of relevant knowledge.

So this publication by the National Interoperability Collaborative, which grows out of the symposium NIC held in California in late March, aims to achieve three things:

► Provide insights, ideas and learning from the symposium’s presentations, discussions, and other activities – i.e., more knowledge;

► Call out the technologies, methodologies and approaches we learned about at the symposium that are being successfully used and can be replicated – i.e., more tools; and,

► Last but absolutely not least, suggest ways, means and inspirations relating to how to create work environments in which “what can we share?” replaces “that’s not possible” as the prevailing organizational culture.

Our event in West Sacramento was titled “A Symposium in the NIC of Time: Advancing Information-Sharing in California and Beyond.” This e-magazine contains a few pages of murals, summaries and photos of select sessions; videos of all the presentations, along with PowerPoints and other materials from the symposium all of which are available on NIC’s new website.

Our intent here is not primarily to reprise what happened at the event. Rather, it is to synthesize the key information, experiences and insights shared by our presenters, and offer that accumulated knowledge as fuel for accelerating progress on exchanging important and sometimes-vital data and for increasing collaboration across the six domains that NIC is working to bring together. That is what we intend to do most intensively as we build our California “chapter” and expand our work in the state and beyond, and it is our hope that you and your organization will also use the contents of this publication to further your own efforts. So please become a participant in NIC’s Community of Networks, get out your notepad and turn the page.

Sincerely,

Daniel Stein
Stewards of Change Institute President and NIC Co-Principal Investigator
One of NIC's distinguishing characteristics is its focus on cross-sector collaboration and learning across six domains: human services, education, public health, public safety, health information technology, and emergency services.
“The only way to tackle these problems across sectors is to share information across those sectors, and that’s where NIC comes in. … This is how revolutions begin.”

- David Fukuzawa
  Managing Director,
  Kresge Foundation

“A Symposium in the NIC of Time: Advancing Information Sharing in California and Beyond

March 26 and 27, 2018
West Sacramento Civic Center

“I don’t want to have multiple, different ways of engaging when I can have a streamlined, single place. NIC is that place.”

- Jessica Kahn
  Senior Expert,
  McKinsey & Company
Key Themes and Concepts

► BUILD A FOUNDATION OF TRUST in all aspects of our work to optimize its prospects for success. We heard this chorus over and over before, during and after the symposium. It seems an obvious truth on its face, but the participants in an interoperability project - or any collaborative effort - frequently focus too narrowly on the technical, logistical and/or procedural aspects of what lies ahead for them. As a result, bumps in their path that could readily be surmounted too often turn into roadblocks. Please read this blog on NIC’s website to get a sense of what’s possible when developing trusting relationships is an explicit priority from the start.

► FOCUS ON THE PEOPLE who are supposed to be the ultimate beneficiaries of our efforts. That certainly means we should keep our eyes on the prize in planning and executing every phase of every initiative, whether it’s designed to serve students, patients, clients, customers, consumers or communities. But it also means we have to identify and work to weed out institutional and research biases relating to any of them. And it means the intended beneficiaries - i.e., real people - have to be heard, represented and integrated into the work as extensively as possible so that their needs, desires and realities are addressed.
DON’T LET THE PERFECT BE THE ENEMY OF THE GOOD. Variations of that aphorism have been used by philosophers, playwrights and politicians for centuries. It was spoken at our symposium by Uma Ahluwalia, Director of the Montgomery County (MD) Department of Health and Human Services, during a session titled “Leading Edge Initiatives and Promising Practices.” There were two common denominators among the initiatives in that presentation: They all had important things to teach about making palatable progress, and none were flawless. “Don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the good” sounds like a mantra for advancing into a better future.

INSTITUTIONALIZE DATA-SHARING ACROSS DOMAINS to tangibly, enduringly improve the lives of children, adults, families and communities - especially the vulnerable and underserved. Here’s how David Fukuzawa, Managing Director of the Kresge Foundation, put it: “If we’re going to achieve greater equity [and] better outcomes for real people, it means we’re going to have to work differently.” Indeed, it means we should follow a vision that sees far beyond launching more and better interoperability initiatives and collaborations, though doing that is clearly necessary; ultimately, it means taking steps to replace closed silos with open communications.
Agenda at a Glance

The symposium was designed to showcase innovative practices around information-sharing and interoperability efforts from across California, as well as from NIC’s other inaugural partners. It provided the opportunity for participants to interact with colleagues from around the country and to learn about leadingedge activities, concepts, and best practices.

“Data sharing is very transactional; interoperability is the holy grail.”

- Margo Edmunds
Vice President, AcademyHealth, NIC Co-PI
Silicon Valley Regional Data Trust: A Scalable Model for Improving Educational Outcomes and Well-Being for Children and Families

The Silicon Valley Regional Data Trust (SVRDT) is a replicable model for improving educational, health, and human services outcomes and well-being for children and families. SVRDT provides a Secure Data Environment connecting public schools, health, and human service agencies in San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz Counties and the University of California, Santa Cruz. The presenters described the policy, legal, and technology architectures that underlie this trust-based system, and demonstrated a prototype of SVRDT’s Secure Data Environment.

Damn the Silos: Using All Available Resources to Prevent and Combat the Opioid Crisis and Other Health Emergencies

Panelists described three current interoperability initiatives designed to address the opioid/heroin epidemic at every level: California’s diverse programs and projects statewide to enable a more-comprehensive approach; an Ohio county drug court’s testing of cognitive technology to aggregate multi-sector data and create a national model for the judiciary; and the New Jersey fusion center’s use of an information-sharing environment to improve the performance of local, county, and state law enforcement.

Building NIC in California and Beyond: Leading Edge: Initiatives and Promising Practices

Innovative interoperability and information-sharing efforts are growing around the U.S., and some are flourishing. This panel put a spotlight on some successful initiatives, such as Live Well San Diego; an integrated and comprehensive client view in Santa Clara County; the Enterprise Integrated Case Management System in Montgomery County, MD; and a new platform to support national implementation of My Brother’s Keeper.

Overview of NIC’s Environmental Scan of Published Interoperability Guidance

Data interoperability and information-sharing efforts are complex and challenging, but a series of promising practices is beginning to emerge. This presentation reported findings from an environmental scan by AcademyHealth (NIC’s leadership partner, with SOCI) that includes interviews with interoperability experts, a review of interoperability guidance documents and toolkits, and identification of themes and gaps in guidance that NIC plans to address.

Watch the presentations here
Agenda

Day 2:

Building Collaborations and Data-Sharing across Multiple Domains

Many successful initiatives employing information-sharing and interoperability have been launched during the last decade, and they have much to teach us. In this presentation, leaders discussed the nuts, bolts, challenges, and lessons learned in furthering their respective organizations, providing insights for attendees, as well as for NIC to leverage in building its new Community of Networks.

NIC In Action: Building the National Interoperability Collaborative and Partner Activities

Attendees learned about NIC’s progress since its launch at the Stewards of Change Institute’s 12th Annual National Symposium, the projects in which NIC is involved – in California and beyond – and got a first look at NIC’s new website, its collaboration portal, and the initial module of its InterOptimability Training and Certification Curriculum (ITCC) program.

The Role of Research and Analytics to Improve the Lives of Children and Families

Research and analytics enable us to accumulate information, turn it into knowledge and, most pointedly, transform it into actionable insights. Panelists discussed how their work is making an impact on populations, as well as individual lives, and how lessons learned can inform NIC’s research focus and considerations for cross-sector initiatives.

The Art of the Possible: Precision Human Services – Sharing Data to Deliver the Right Care at the Right Time

Person-centered care is being refined and redefined as a result of innovative information-sharing initiatives in California and around the country. This session explored promising near- and longer-term opportunities to improve the way systems share information and deliver care.
A Visual Representation of Our Two-Day Journey
“We can learn from each other not only by sharing our successes, but also our failures.”

-Michael Wilkening
Undersecretary, California HHS Agency
When planning a project, start with a policy-based reason to share information and ask what data you need to share to further that policy and/or achieve its objectives.

Develop interpersonal relationships with people in the domains/sectors with which you want to exchange information, then use those relationships to develop trust.

Change can be cost-effective, especially if a long-term perspective is applied; that is, spending today can be an investment for improving (and saving) lives tomorrow.

Identify and leverage existing knowledge and standards, rather than re-creating what's already available, then focus on filling the gaps. This applies to processes as well as the information itself.

Determine how data will be managed and used - and who the managers and users will be - before it starts flowing, and have resources in place to deal with it.

Standards can be enablers or show-stoppers. So there needs to be a consensus among partners about which ones to use, for what reasons and in which circumstances.

Data-sharing agreements can usually be achieved when specific elements, their purpose, and user roles are clearly defined - then begin with an agreement by program leaders across the organization.

Organize and present local data in ways that not only inform and are useful, but also support policy and system change while increasing accountability.

We need to create a science/methodology for multi-sector evaluation, because the return on investment in the world of health occurs across systems and over time.

It can be difficult to reproduce place-based initiatives. So we need assess each to determine if it's replicable, scalable or a model from which to learn and adapt.
Interoperability and collaboration are not only front-and-center in NIC’s name; they are at its core. That means, quite literally, that we cannot succeed in the important work we all believe must be done without forming relationships and partnerships. And we cannot succeed without taking concrete steps - leaps, whenever possible - toward responsibly, securely sharing information across domains. We need to do that because we know it will not only improve systems but, most pointedly and vitally, it will demonstrably benefit human beings.

Here are a few examples of activities NIC is already working on:

**Building NIC in California and beyond.** We are partnering to support projects in several states and are continuing to develop relationships and infrastructure nationwide, but our first effort to scale statewide is in California. If you want more information or want to participate, please email NIC@stewardsofchange.org. At the same time, we are planning NIC’s second regional symposium in New England this fall, building on the learning and momentum we achieved in Sacramento a few months ago, and then will hold a national event early next year.

**Launching NIC’s Collaboration and Communications Hub.** We’re particularly excited by this element of our new website, www.nic-us.org, because it’s the place anyone can go to share or get information; start, discuss or form relationships to further a project; or simply engage in an exchange of ideas with other knowledgeable professionals within your field or in related ones. Please take a look and start a conversation here. While you’re on the site, please consider joining the many organizations and individuals who already are Partners or Members.

**Publishing NIC’s environmental scan report.** Early next month, we’ll publish the findings of an extensive environmental scan by AcademyHealth (NIC’s leadership partner, with Stewards of Change Institute) that includes interviews with interoperability and information-sharing experts; a review of relevant guidance documents, toolkits, and best practices; and identification of themes and gaps that we plan to address.

**Providing state-of-the-art training.** The first module of our InterOptimability Training and Certification Curriculum (ITCC) program will be available within a few months. It will focus on InterOptimability, a unique methodology designed to build competencies to meet the demands of an increasingly complex and interconnected workforce. Learn more here. Subsequent modules will include Confidentiality and Privacy, Data and Knowledge Management, and much more.

If you’re reading this publication, it probably means you’re already collaborating and interoperating to some extent, or are planning to do so. As some of you already know, because you attended our symposium in Sacramento and/or because you’ve already participating with us, NIC was explicitly created to help. We invite you to join us to further the efforts outlined above, go to our website to learn more, and please send us suggestions of what else we can do to advance your own work and to support progress more generally.

Is achieving all of this possible? To borrow a phrase from John Lennon, “You might say I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one.” Together, let’s make this vision a reality.
Sincere Thanks to Our Supporters

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