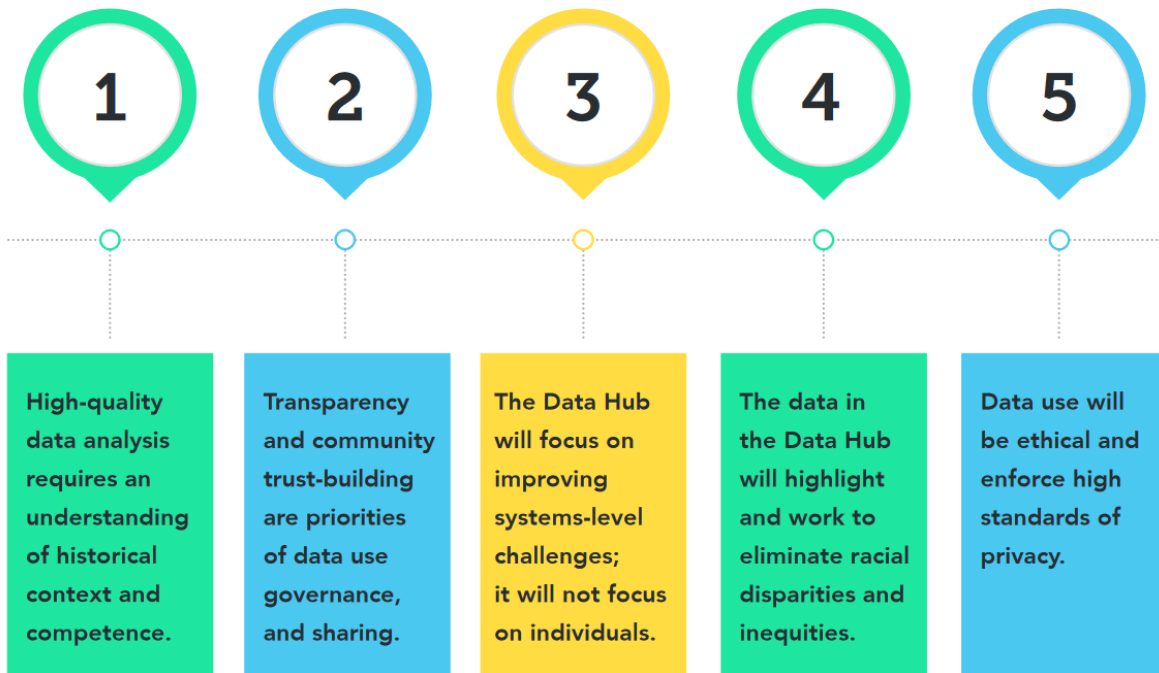# Overview of the Baltimore City Youth Data Hub

Introduction

The Baltimore City Youth Data Hub (Youth Data Hub) is an innovative, integrated data system that securely links data across youth-serving organizations while ensuring anonymity, community oversight, and adherence to strict guidelines. Established in 2022, the Youth Data Hub aims to enhance the quality of life outcomes for young people in Baltimore City.

Over the past year, we have made significant strides toward embedding equity and youth and community practices through the Youth Data Hub. The Youth Data Hub is grounded in the following guiding principles, which emerged through extensive engagement with diverse stakeholders:

1	2	3	4	5
High-quality data analysis requires an understanding of historical context and competence.	Transparency and community trust-building are priorities of data use governance, and sharing.	The Data Hub will focus on improving systems-level challenges; it will not focus on individuals.	The data in the Data Hub will highlight and work to eliminate racial disparities and inequities.	Data use will be ethical and enforce high standards of privacy.

Project Partners

The partners participating in the Baltimore Equity in Practice Learning Community include Baltimore's Promise, Baltimore City Public Schools, and Baltimore City Government.

Goals

We are committed to ensuring that equity is deeply embedded in every aspect of the Youth Data Hub, in a way that is sustainable and aligned with the community. We are working towards this goal by:

- Embedding equity in policies, procedures, and implementation, and partnering with local consultants who focus on incorporating racial equity in data access and governance.

- Establishing the Community Research and Advisory Committee (C-RAC) to ensure community voices guide the work of the Youth Data Hub.

Key Achievements

Hiring a Data Equity Consultant

We engaged a local, Black women-led team of data equity consultants to provide strategic support in thought partnership, fostering collective mindset shifts, and co-designing structural changes. This team played a crucial role in reflecting on our policies, design, and operational practices to ensure they align with our equity goals.

They facilitated workshops with data stewards and community leaders, focusing on best practices for collaboration, data infrastructure, and collection processes. These workshops equipped institutions to embed equity-driven practices, driving system-level change. The consultants also co-created and facilitated community listening sessions and leveraged their networks to engage community members not typically involved in these initiatives, encouraging their participation in the C-RAC.

Community Listening Sessions

We hosted four community engagement sessions—two in-person and two virtual—aimed at gathering feedback on the first three data projects. These sessions explored what it means to empower community members with data to advocate for better solutions and how to create a community governance board that enables meaningful contributions. Over 200 participants engaged in these interactive sessions, which featured powerful youth spoken word performances highlighting the impact of research and data on communities that have been historically disadvantaged.

Established Community Research and Action Committee

In June 2024, the Executive Committee of the Baltimore City Youth Data Hub appointed 14 community members as the inaugural Community Research and Action Committee (C-RAC). This diverse group, ranging in age from 16 to over 60, includes 50% who are 26 years old or younger, and 72% are Black. Representing various neighborhoods across Baltimore, they bring a wealth of diverse lived experiences.

In August 2024, we hosted a special joint session between the Data Oversight Committee and C-RAC. City Councilman Zeke Cohen and Baltimore City Public Schools CEO Dr. Sonja Santelises (pictured above) joined for an inspiring session focused on the critical role of youth and community voices in research and decision-making.

Other Activities

Equity Definitions: Collaborators of the Youth Data Hub are co-creating core definitions of racial equity and related terms to ensure consistent alignment and transparency in all community discussions. Now that we have the C-RAC established we will review these terms and definitions with them and make revisions as necessary.

Data Landscape: We are actively documenting various data initiatives across Baltimore City, highlighting their purpose and how they contribute to or differ from the Youth Data Hub. This helps us better understand community-driven data efforts, their objectives, and how data is being used. This document is a critical tool for securing funding and effectively communicating the Youth Data Hub's impact to stakeholders.

Video on Racialized History: Partnering organizations supporting the Youth Data Hub reflected on Baltimore's history of racism and segregation in research and data collection. This video serves as an educational resource, emphasizing the importance of community-centered, equity-focused data practices to prevent perpetuating existing inequities.

Data Acknowledgements: Inspired by land acknowledgments, we crafted a statement that acknowledges the past harms caused by data misuse in vulnerable communities. This language advocates for more community-centered data practices that prioritize community needs and values. This is a collective outpouring of our growing understanding of the responsibility to hold data as a community trust in humility, respect, and love. The statement was created by Dat Equity Consultants, Two Gems Consulting, and performed by youth spoken word artist, Keyma Flight.