



## Network Survey Series

# GOVERNANCE



AISP supports the ethical use of individual-level administrative data for social policy change and advocates for the expansion of resources and infrastructure that makes this possible. We help foster cross-sector collaborations, build the relationships and trust that enable and sustain data sharing, and center racial equity. The following brief shares lessons from a February 2023 survey of 37 state and local data integration efforts in the AISP Network. All sites surveyed have some data governance and data sharing agreements in place, but vary widely in maturity, scope, purpose, and approach. Among the 37 survey respondents (19 states and 18 local efforts), there is representation from every major region of the continental US and high representation of coastal states and cities.

**This brief explores how sites are developing and institutionalizing cross-sector data governance.**

**APRIL 2025**

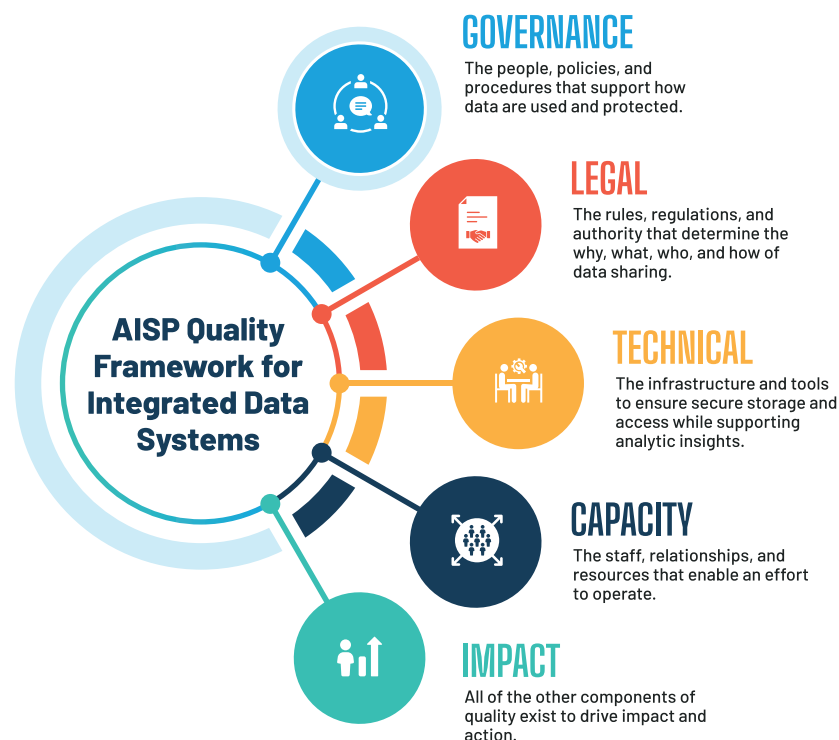
# Introduction to Governance



**Data Governance.** The people, policies and procedures that determine how data are managed, used, and protected. Data governance creates rules of the road for collaboration, fostering a culture of trust and shared responsibility.

The particulars of data governance policies and procedures vary widely based on the vision, mission, and guiding principles for data sharing established by the partners involved. A narrow goal of creating a research database to support indicators and reporting will suggest one governance approach, which will differ significantly from the approach needed to support real-time integrated data for credentialed users managing service delivery. When the purpose and use of data infrastructure changes, governance must also change. Given this, iteration is an essential part of building consensus and adjusting to fit the needs and capacity of partners over time.

Governance is one of 5 components of quality for integrated data systems (IDS) and the foundation for IDS success. For more on other components of quality, visit <https://aisp.upenn.edu/quality-framework-for-integrated-data-systems>



# Survey Analysis

## Foundations of governance across the AISP Network

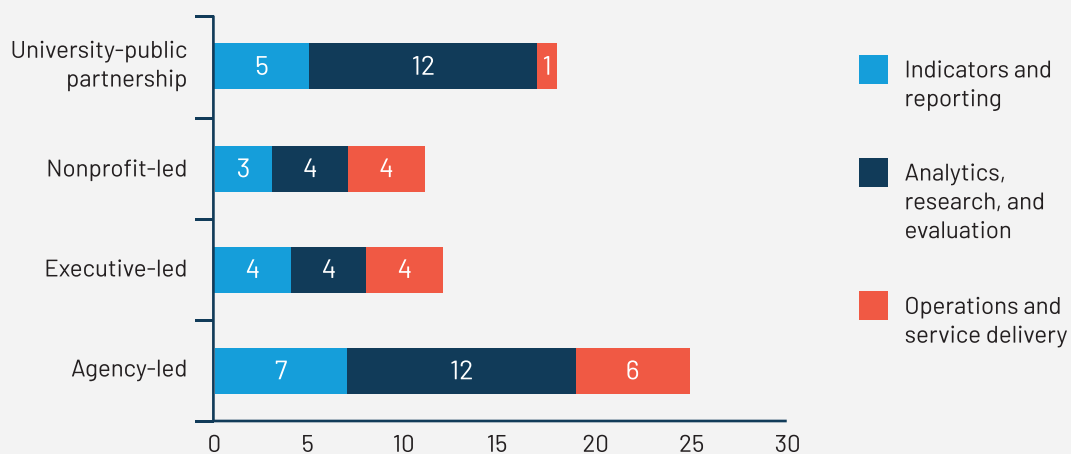


### PURPOSE AND MANAGEMENT MODEL

Governance both articulates and operationalizes a site's purpose for integrating data. We asked sites which of three core purposes are driving their data integration effort: indicators and reporting; analytics, research and evaluation; or operations and service delivery. Ten sites are focused on all 3 core purposes but many are more specialized. Sites focused on only analytics, research, and evaluation remain the most common across our network (13).

We also asked sites what kind of management model they use—in other words, which organization hosts the data integration effort and manages data governance activities. Agency-led sites are the most common management model, followed closely by university public partnerships where university staff facilitate key governance functions on behalf of their partners who contribute data. Five respondents host their data integration within an executive office, such as a governor's or mayor's office or office of management and budget. While nonprofit-led sites are less common, they continue to grow as a model. The chart below shows management models across the network, as well as by core purpose for integrating data.

#### Purpose for Data Sharing, by Management Model



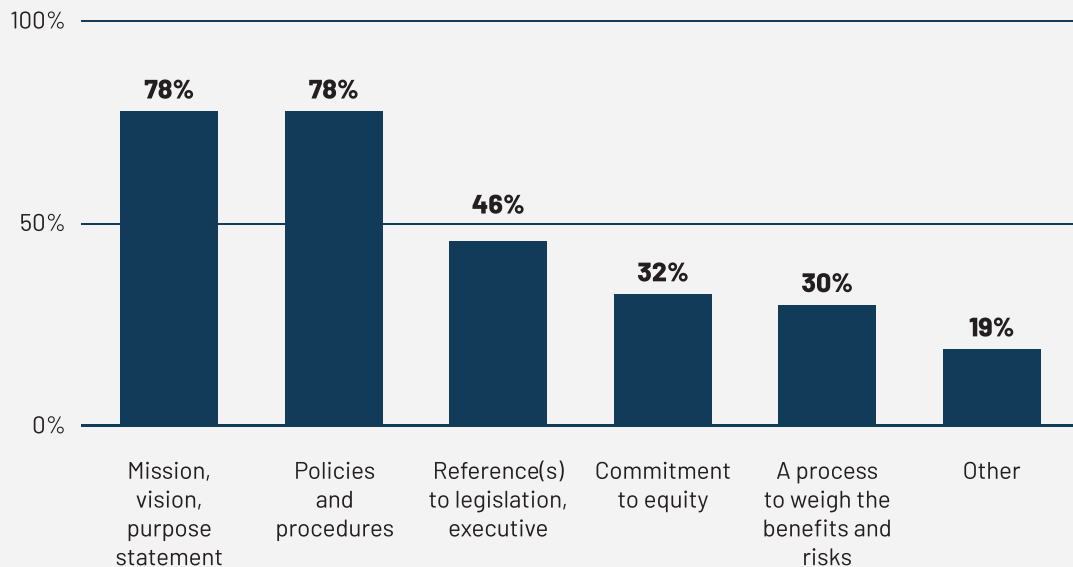
Total respondents = 37 sites



## Foundational Documents

Foundational governance documents define the scope and purpose of data sharing efforts. We asked sites what their foundational governance documents include and found they are often mission-centered (78%) and process oriented (78%). A little less than half (46%) also reference legal authority for sharing data and about a third describe a process to measure the risks and benefits of data sharing. Explicit commitments to equity in governance documents have been on the rise; between 2020 and 2023, the number increased by roughly 50% (from 23% to 32%).

### Foundational Governance Documents



## Mission Statements

Including mission and vision statements in governance documents is a best practice that can help ground partners in a shared purpose and bound the aspirations of a data sharing effort. Of sites surveyed, 84% said they have a mission statement. Most who do not have one specific to their data sharing effort have a host agency/organization with a clear mission or vision statement related to government performance or improvement overall.



Our analysis of mission and vision statements revealed that sites typically emphasize improvement of outcomes for residents/community members. Some sites talk about a vision for the community while others describe the opportunity to use data to improve systems, service delivery, or government overall. Nearly half directly mention linkage or integration capacity. The other most common themes identified among respondent statements were use of evidence for research and evaluation, data use to improve policies/services/systems, data use to improve outcomes for people and communities, and getting data into the hands of community members.

Other key elements found in mission statements across multiple sites include “promoting equity” or “addressing inequity,” combatting poverty, and providing “neutrality” or “nonpartisan” research services.

Of sites with mission or vision statements, the majority post these statements publicly, using these north stars not only to guide governance internally but also to help communicate their values to partners and the public.

**The California Cradle to Career Data System (C2C) leads with their mission and explains how they operationalize their values.**

**LEARN MORE**

**The NYC Center for Innovation through Data Intelligence shares a vision statement and highlights agency partners who help actualize their vision.**

**READ IT HERE**



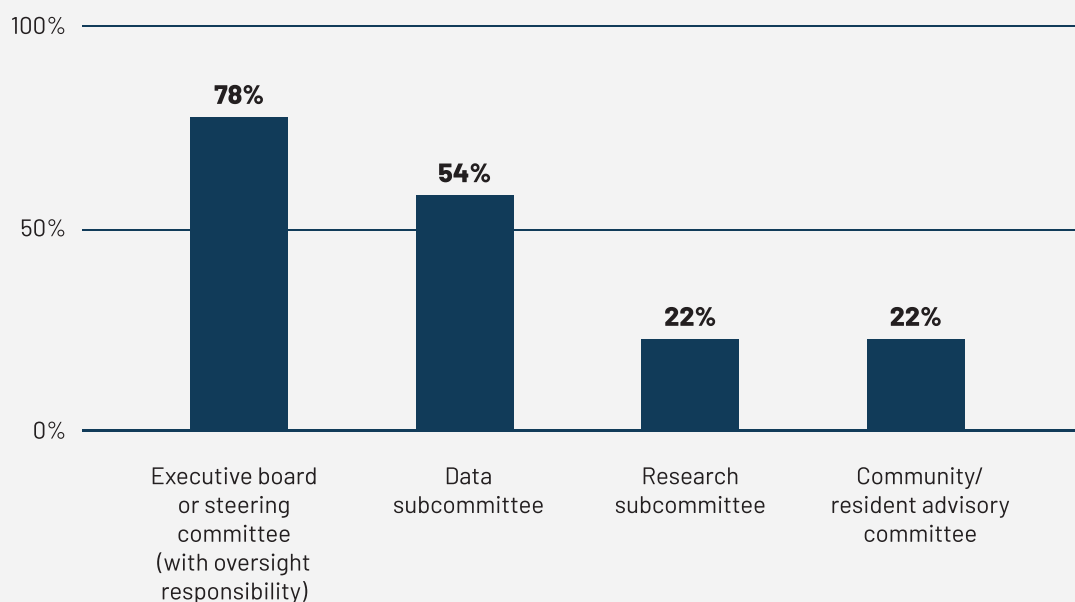
## How Sites Make Decisions



### COMPONENTS OF GOVERNANCE

How governance is operationalized differs between sites. The teams that conduct the work of governance determine how decisions are made and how priorities are set, and by whom. Most sites (78%) have an executive board or steering committee with oversight responsibilities. Data or research subcommittees are also very common, and the use of community or resident advisory committees is on the rise.

#### Components of Site Governance Structures



Many sites also report that they convene project-specific subcommittees or advisory structures to guide them on specific topics, like race, ethnicity and language data standards, or specific policy areas, such as child welfare or housing.

Iowa's Integrated Data System for Decision Making utilizes a Data Stewardship Committee to complement their Governing Board. The Committee is made up of agency interest-holders appointed by Directors of data-contributing agencies to provide project authorization, explain and translate data and policy nuances, and advocate for data use between departments. [LEARN MORE](#)



There is also a growing presence of advocates and community members within governance structures, with one in four respondents indicating that community advisors are a part of their governance structure. Community representation is more common at the local level: 60% of local sites' governance structures include advocates and community members or clients, as compared to 40% of state sites. It is also more common in agency-led efforts than in executive-led efforts, which makes intuitive sense, as agency staff are often situated closer to those delivering services and interacting directly with clients.

Sites reported using a variety of different models for involving community members in governance and decision-making, including deliberative democracy, collective consensus models, community participatory action research, learning communities, and human-centered design sessions. These models span the spectrum of community engagement. The more power is shared, the more “social license” is built.



**The Charlotte Regional Data Trust and the Baltimore Youth Data Hub, among other network sites, have both created advisory groups of community members and youth, respectively, to provide oversight and decision-making about data systems activities. We've written up long form case studies on their journey towards building more participatory data governance structures. [EXPLORE THEM HERE](#)**

It's important to note that meaningful incorporation of community voices into data governance structures requires resources. Some but not all community advisory boards are made up of paid positions to support participation from less resourced partners, including representatives from nonprofit organizations, faith-based institutions, community-based organizations, and even the community broadly. States often rely on community advisory structures that are more geographically or programmatically focused for individual projects given the scope of their efforts.



*Resourcing advisory boards and community participation is essential to equitable data use. Participants in AISP's **Equity in Practice Learning Community** received funds to support community engagement to help build the practice in the field, and evaluate what works well across different contexts.*





## PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

In addition to asking about how their governance was structured and who was involved, we asked sites how they determine research project priorities. Prioritization strategies varied widely and included:

- **Executive leadership prioritization** (e.g., Governor, Mayor, Commissioner endorsed initiatives)
- **Governance committee prioritization** (e.g. how many data partners are interested)
- **Prioritization based on impact** (e.g., use of risk vs. benefit tool, considerations around levers for change based on findings)
- **Prioritization based on operational capacity** (e.g., considerations around funding or staff expertise)

We also asked sites how they review data requests. Sites mostly seek approval for projects from their executive board and data owners, and community review for projects is far less common (but certainly a growing best practice). Of note, many have different review procedures for internal analytic or operational requests than for external research requests. Among university public partnerships and even some agency-led efforts, institutional review boards (IRBs) commonly play a role in approving research projects. Of the 37 sites surveyed, 7 sites do not accept external requests at all.

Sites range in maturity and transparency in this area: 10 sites do not yet have fully formed data request processes while, on the other end of the spectrum, 14 sites have formalized processes published on the web. These can vary from traditional applications that require a clear purpose and data use license request to inquiry forms where a requestor provides a general project idea to develop with IDS staff.

Publishing clear metadata describing the data assets available for use is a best practice that supports legal and ethical use and facilitates a smoother data use request process. This remains an area of growth for sites, with only 21% currently reporting that they regularly post metadata publicly.

**The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Data Sharing Guidebook was created by agency staff in collaboration with AISP to establish clear(er) processes for data sharing integration both across DHHS and with external partners. The guidebook is intended to support people who request data and data owners (those with legal authority to share data).**

**EXPLORE IT HERE**

**The Wisconsin Administrative Data Core provides potential users with an interest form in order to connect with an IRP staff member, as well as a formal data use application for those more assured of their purpose.**

**SEE MORE**



Learn more about sites' data access procedures by exploring their individual pages, accessible through the [AISP Network Map](#). Information on data holdings, policy area priorities, and more are also provided.



# Looking Ahead



**Governance is central to safeguarding data as a public good and should be considered an iterative endeavor. Approaches to governance should be tailored to site context and will evolve with capacity and maturity.**

By understanding the current landscape of data governance across the AISP Network, we hope to inform and inspire all those with an interest in ethical cross-sector data use.

## WONDERING WHERE TO GO NEXT?

- If this document raised questions for you about IDS approaches broadly, check out our [Network map](#).
- If you are interested in questions to guide decisions about data access and use, see [Four Questions to Guide Decision-Making for Data Sharing and Integration](#), and if you are interested in developing an IDS in your community, check out our [Get Started page](#) on the AISP website.
- If you want to evolve the way governance happens in your community, see our [Quality Framework for IDS](#) and [Toolkit on Centering Racial Equity Throughout Data Integration 2.0](#).

## A NOTE ON THE DATA

To improve data quality, initial survey results have been supplemented with document review and qualitative research. Some responses have been omitted since we first presented on these findings to better represent the current state of the field. If you have questions about any of the changes, please reach out to the AISP team at [aisp@sp2.upenn.edu](mailto:aisp@sp2.upenn.edu).

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[www.aisp.upenn.edu](http://www.aisp.upenn.edu)