AISP

Network Survey Series

IMPACT

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 all other components of the quality framework culminate in positive impact for communities across the country.

SEPTEMBER 2025
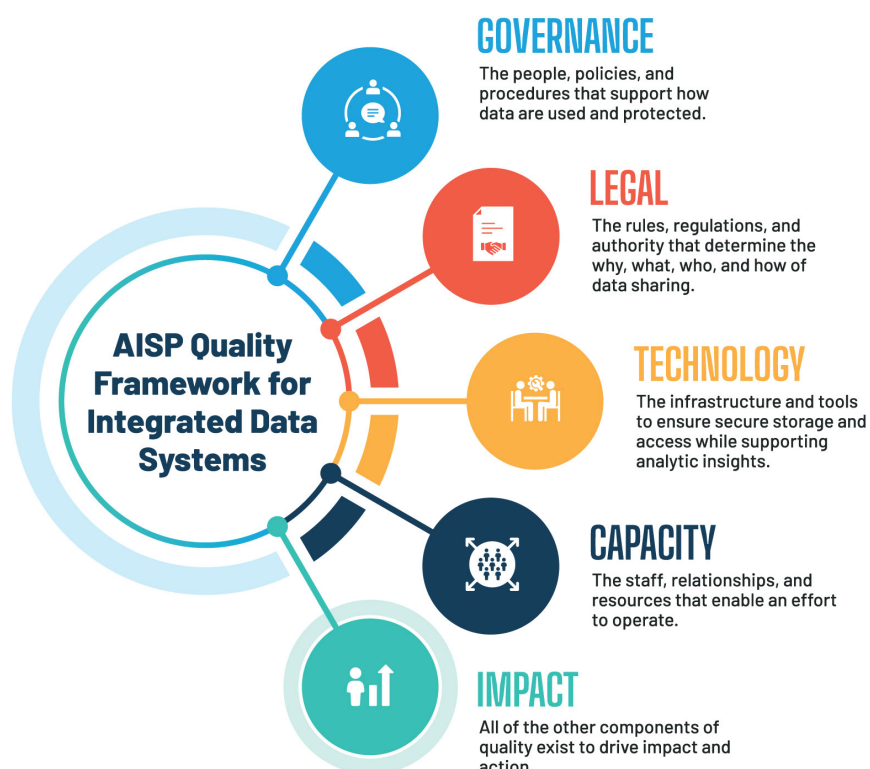
Introduction

Impact across the AISP Network

Impact: the outcomes realized when IDS create insights, drive action and improve lives

The first four quality components help us understand the goals of data sharing efforts across our network and what it takes to get there—relationally, technically, and beyond. Impact is how we measure our progress towards those goals and document our achievements. We include impact in our quality framework because administrative data are a public good, and should be used to benefit the public. **Impact is about how we turn data into insight and insight into action to improve the lives of residents.** It's about ensuring that we take a moment for celebration, appreciation, and evaluation: what can we accomplish when we bring data together, and what can we do to more fully realize our intended impact?

In this brief, we will highlight what data are being shared and integrated and how data sharing efforts measure, describe, and communicate their impact.

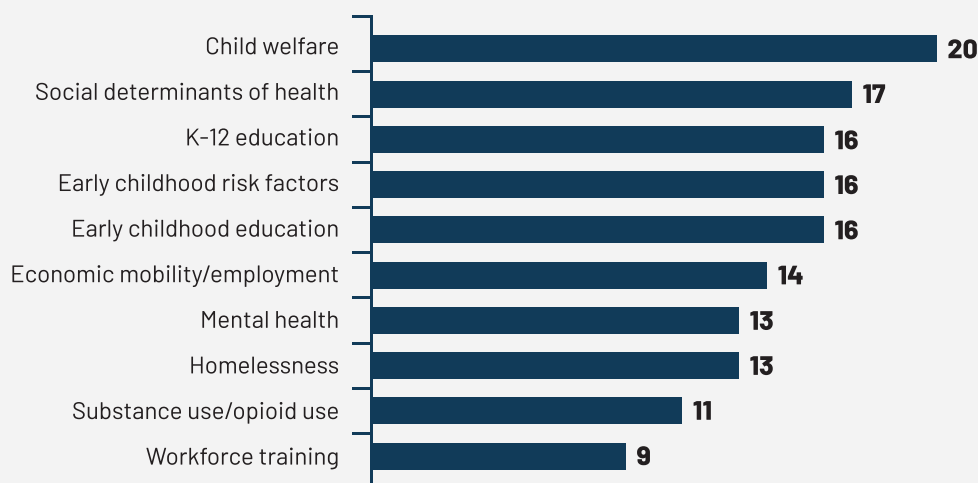Impact is the fifth of five components of quality for integrated data systems (IDS). For more on other components of quality, visit **https://aisp.upenn. edu/quality-framework-for-integrated-data-systems/**

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

LEGAL
The rules, regulations, and authority that determine the why, what, who, and how of data sharing.

TECHNOLOGY
The infrastructure and tools to ensure secure storage and access while supporting analytic insights.

CAPACITY
The staff, relationships, and resources that enable an effort to operate.

IMPACT
All of the other components of quality exist to drive impact and action.

AISP Quality Framework for Integrated Data Systems

Survey Analysis

Policy & data priorities

The impacts of data capacity and use across the AISP Network span a number of policy domains. Figure 1 (below) highlights their diverse policy priorities across a wide spectrum of social programs. The most common priorities for members as of 2023 were child welfare and social determinants of health. Early education and K-12 education were not far behind.

Figure 1: Top policy priorities of IDS

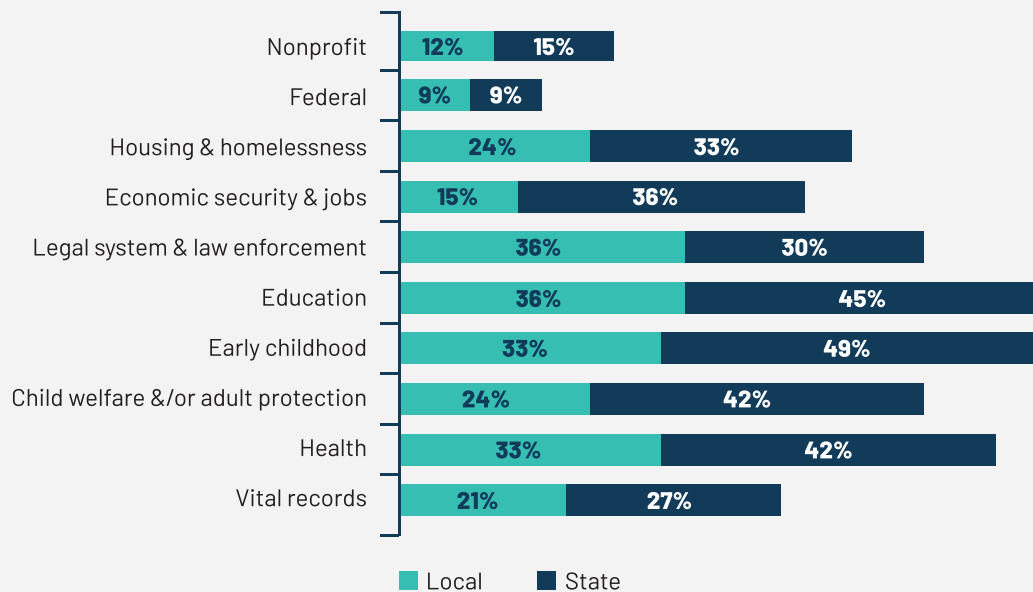| Policy Area	Count
Child welfare	20
Social determinants of health	17
K-12 education	16
Early childhood risk factors	16
Early childhood education	16
Economic mobility/employment	14
Mental health	13
Homelessness	13
Substance use/opioid use	11
Workforce training	9

Looking for research examples in a particular policy area? We've compiled studies and reports developed using integrated data in the AISP Resource Library. Use the "policy area" tab if you're searching for a specific topic.

Figure 2 (below) shows the categories of data being accessed and integrated by survey respondents. The most common categories of data are education, early childhood, and health, which are aligned with the top policy priorities of our sites.

Figure 2: Most common data domains

Domain	Local	State
Nonprofit	12%	15%
Federal	9%	9%
Housing & homelessness	24%	33%
Economic security & jobs	15%	36%
Legal system & law enforcement	36%	30%
Education	36%	45%
Early childhood	33%	49%
Child welfare &/or adult protection	24%	42%
Health	33%	42%
Vital records	21%	27%

■ Local   ■ State

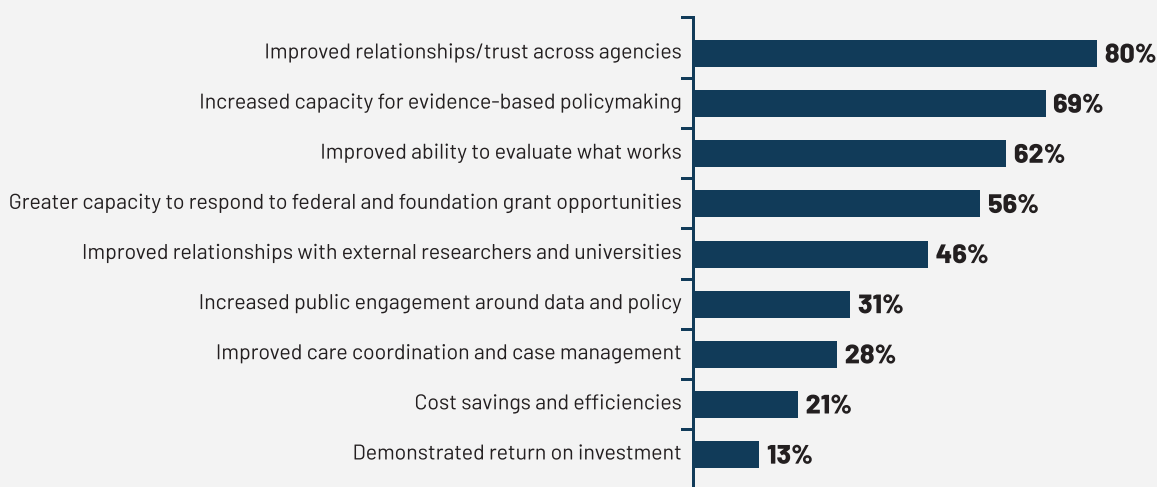**Want to learn more about AISP Network site data holdings? Explore our public data matrix tool. It's interactive, allowing users to cross-reference which sites have a certain combination of data; granular, providing subcategories within each category; and specific, offering the option to see combinations of holdings by site.**

Diverse data sharing impacts

So, what do efforts do with these rich data assets? We asked data sharing efforts in our network to share impacts across a range of outcomes, from direct and measurable improvements to policy or programs to more relational shifts, like increased dialogue and collaboration across agencies. Figure 3 (below) summarizes what we found, and the following section discusses key themes.

Figure 3: Reported impacts of IDS capacity

Impact	Percentage
Improved relationships/trust across agencies	80%
Increased capacity for evidence-based policymaking	69%
Improved ability to evaluate what works	62%
Greater capacity to respond to federal and foundation grant opportunities	56%
Improved relationships with external researchers and universities	46%
Increased public engagement around data and policy	31%
Improved care coordination and case management	28%
Cost savings and efficiencies	21%
Demonstrated return on investment	13%

IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS & TRUST

Most integrated data systems across all stages of development and levels of government find their efforts improve relationships and trust across agencies—an important finding at a time when government remains highly siloed, resources are constrained, and agency priorities are often perceived to be in competition with one another. Relatedly, nearly half of respondents saw their relationships with external partners improve through data sharing, and 31% reported increased public engagement with data projects. With record-high levels of distrust in government, being intentional about using the quality framework to build transparent and effective data systems offers an avenue to rebuilding relationships and bringing community voices and insights into government decision-making. For example, in **Baltimore**, a city with a long history of harms perpeturated by both research institutions and government against the city's Black residents, the IDS was created with an explicit mission to meet community information needs. It is also subject to community oversight, and has created a diverse venue for shared visioning and shared accountability. In 2023, a cross-program look at citywide summer youth programs led Baltimore to re-allocate funds to prioritize programs for youth ages 16–24 who were not working or in school, with youth directly engaged in the grant-making process.[1]

[1] Baltimore's Promise. (2023). *Youth Opportunities Landscape 2023: Cataloging and analyzing programming opportunities.*

EVALUATION CAPACITY & EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY-MAKING

Roughly two-thirds of respondents said that their investments in data integration capacity had already improved their ability to evaluate what works. Perhaps even more crucial, over two-thirds of sites also reported that their data integration efforts increased their capacity to use data to improve policymaking, demonstrating that results generated from the data are reaching the hands of those who can act on findings. Rather than ad hoc linkages, which can take years to execute, efforts with routine governance, legal, and technical procedures for data linkage produce insights in time to inform urgent decisions. For example, in 2020, the **Rhode Island EOHHS Ecosystem** was able to quickly study the overlapping crisis of COVID-19 and opioid overdoses to make evidence-based recommendations to a state task force, which included a focus on harm reduction and recovery resilience.[2] In July 2021, Rhode Island made the historic move to become the first state in the nation to approve legislation for supervised consumption sites.[3] As implementation work continues, the EOHHS Ecosystem will be an essential tool in measuring impacts and shaping the state's response to the evolving addiction and overdose crisis.

There are countless examples of research and evaluation from the AISP Network that have led to evidence-based policy changes, including:

● Research from **Case Western** Reserve University's Child Household Integrated Longitudinal Data (CHILD) on the **downstream effects of lead exposure on outcomes for children and youth in Cuyahoga County** has motivated policy and action to bring local housing up to lead safe standards.

● Briefs from the **Massachusetts Public Data Warehouse** on the characteristics of non-fatal opioid overdoes in Massachusetts have been used to increase Naloxone access and usage in the state.

● The **Charlotte Regional Data Trust's Quality of Life Explorer** was used to identify pilot locations for **Staying in Place**, an anti-displacement strategy that aims to keep residents in their neighborhoods and preserve housing affordability.

OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS & CARE COORDINATION

About one-third of efforts also reported that their IDS has improved care coordination and/or case management outcomes. Of note, this type of impact on individual-level service delivery requires a technical and legal framework distinct from research and evaluation use cases. While it is substantially more complex and resource-intensive to build an IDS for operational purposes, these systems can produce impressive, tangible impacts for residents. For example, in **Allegheny County, PA**, integrated data have been used to allocate housing supports more equitably and effectively. In 2024, after deploying a new prioritization tool based on linked data, the county successfully closed a long-standing racial gap in outcomes for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. They are also using integrated data to prioritize rental assistance for those most at risk of eviction.[4]

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[2] Berkowitz, E. & Jenkins, D. (2021). *AISP Case Study: How the Rhode Island EOHHS Ecosystem Leverages Federal Funding to Support State Data Capacity.* Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy. University of Pennsylvania.

[3] Rhode Island Department of Health. (2025, August). *Harm Reduction Center Pilot Program.*

[4] Dalton, E. (2024, June 4–5). Using data to operate the homelessness system [Conference presentation PowerPoint slides]. AISP Network Meeting 2024, Philadelphia, PA, United States.

It is also worth noting that some efforts with strong research and evaluation capacity have successfully built on that capacity to eventually take on operational use cases. In Georgia, a partnership between the **Georgia Policy Labs**, an IDS initially focused on research practice partnerships, was leveraged to support school districts that were struggling to deliver the new Pandemic EBT program that was developed during the COVID pandemic to ensure families could feed their children while schooling was remote.[5] Partners were able to quickly execute new agreements based on existing relationships and infastructure, getting over $1 billion in much needed funds for food to disconnected kids and families at a crucial time. The IDS has since been used to study pandemic learning loss and target academic and social supports.

FINANCIAL BENEFITS & RETURN ON INVESTMENT

More sites than ever before are reporting a return on investment (ROI) from integrated data capacity, yet this can be tricky to measure and even harder to communicate. It is challenging to convert the downstream cost savings and effects of program improvements (e.g., targeted workforce supports to youth in foster care that result in higher-paying jobs, education programs for people exiting incarceration that decrease recidivism, etc.) into dollars for two main reasons. First, many gains are realized over years, meaning that impacts require measurement over long periods of time that don't coincide with typical budget or reporting cycles. Second, straightforward ROI analysis and story-telling in government social spending is made more difficult by the "wrong pocket problem." This term refers to a situation where investments are made by one entity, but the benefits are realized by a different entity or "pocket." On one hand, this is particularly true when it comes to the types of cross-agency issues that members of our network are working on (e.g., social determinants of health). On the other, data linkage capacity ultimately represents a tool that can help combat the wrong pocket problem.

With routine data sharing, governments inch closer to being able to follow individuals longitudinally and across systems to truly measure impact holistically and make the case for investing in a given program based on a broader range of outcome measures. For example, in **Washington State**, investments in the state's Integrated Client Database have made it possible to link information from across over 30 Department of Social and Health Services programs to information on the same clients also served by other agencies. While the overall ROI of their IDS capacity has never been estimated, a single pilot use of the data to develop predictive modeling tools for care managers in the Health Homes program is informative. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) evaluated the impact of using the tool for care coordination and found it produced $67.5 million in Medicare savings in it's first 30 months, leading to approximately $21 million paid back to the state.[6]

Another way data integration efforts see the financial benefits of data capacity investments in the near-term is by tapping into into new funding sources. As Figure 3 shows, over half of efforts in the network say they are gaining access to new grant funds by using integrated data to quantify need, justify their requests, and more efficiently and effectively target resources. An example of this comes from **Charlotte, North Carolina** where IDS analysis of youth homelessness across different systems and metrics led local schools to receive more federal McKinney Vento dollars to support students.[7]

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[5] Georgia Health Policy Center. (n.d.). *Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer*. Georgia State University.

[6] Wright, C. (2016, January 25). *Washington State's Health Homes create millions in Medicare savings [Press release]*. Washington State Department of Social and Health Services.

[7] Allison-Jacobs, R. (2018). *IDS Case Study: The Institute for Social Capital*. Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy. University of Pennsylvania.

Finally, time is our most precious non-renewable resource. Establishing routine pathways for data sharing, access, and use can ultimately reduce staff time spent on ad hoc requests. In North Carolina, the **Department of Health and Human Services** estimated an 80% reduction per use case in both staff time spent and overall time taken to execute legal agreements after an enterprise legal framework for data sharing was implemented.[8]

In summary, IDS impact or return on investment has many components which may be hard to monetize comprehensively but are represented in the below graphic as individual sections.

Targeted service delivery → Downstream program savings → Reduced staff time → New funding sources → IDS return on investment

IMPACT IN THEIR OWN WORDS

When we asked network members to reflect on their impact and consider their proudest recent achievement related to data integration, we heard a mixture of both 1) policy and community impacts and 2) progress on the data governance and legal processes required to get there. Here are some quotes directly from efforts:

- **"Getting our enterprise MOU over the finish line and receiving three multi-year grants, giving us the opportunity to build infrastructure for sustained IDS work and a community-based learning network"**

- **"Changed internal culture focused on reducing inequities and addressing power imbalances"**

- **"Supporting an evaluation of our local jail's medication for opioid use disorder program"**

- **"Creation of our Early College dashboards, which required solving for a new use of the integration between student records in K-12 and higher ed"**

- **"Responding to the urgent decision making needs of our state government partners"**

- **"Having service recipients at the decision making table"**

- **"New projects that connect residents with cash assistance or entitlements to reduce poverty"**
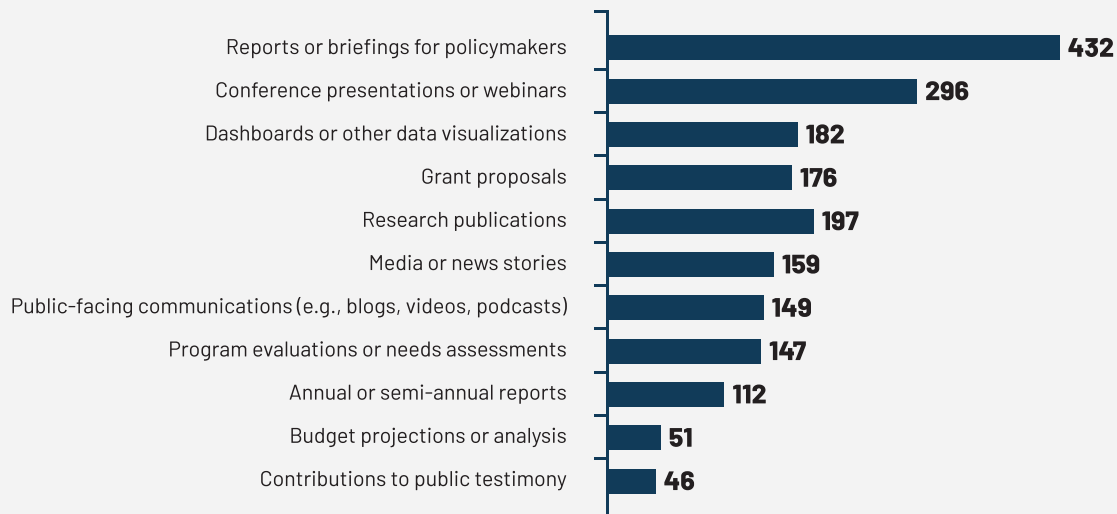
Communicating impact

As the examples above demonstrate, **impact comes from what we do with information and insights,** and the best way to share insights will depend on the audience and context. Reports or briefings can be effective for communicating data findings to policymakers, while conferences and webinars can help extend your reach into academic, programmatic, and philanthropic circles within and beyond your jurisdiction.

[8] Hawn Nelson, A., Hogle, P., Zanti, S., Proescholdbell, S., & Tenenbaum, J. D. (2024). A governance and legal framework for getting to "yes" with enterprise-level data integration. *Data & Policy*, 6, e31. **https://doi.org/10.1017/dap.2024.23**

We asked efforts how they communicate their impacts, and found an impressive number and range of products (see Figure 4 below) that were driven by integrated data capacity across the 36 respondents.

Figure 4: AISP Network site data integration products from 2021 through 2023

Product	Count
Reports or briefings for policymakers	432
Conference presentations or webinars	296
Dashboards or other data visualizations	182
Grant proposals	176
Research publications	197
Media or news stories	159
Public-facing communications (e.g., blogs, videos, podcasts)	149
Program evaluations or needs assessments	147
Annual or semi-annual reports	112
Budget projections or analysis	51
Contributions to public testimony	46

Annual reports are an emerging best practice among AISP Network sites. These communication tools offer a tried-and-true method for reflection, typically reaching core audiences with a summary of achievements and strategy. Strong annual reports emphasize the importance of partnerships, utilize clean visuals to succinctly communicate impact, and reflect how research connects to actions and outcomes.

Annual reports differ based on an effort's purpose and core audience.

- Some sites are legislatively mandated to provide an annual report, like **DataLinkCT** (formerly CT P20 WIN).

- Others choose to create annual reports to emphasize their role in government—like **Philly IDEA** who publishes a yearly review describing the ways they're contributing to better city services.

- Some sites are intentionally orienting their annual reports toward a more public audience, like **Baltimore's Promise's Report to the Community** or the **Charlotte Regional Data Trust's State of Our Data**.

- There are also less traditional ways to reflect and communicate impact, like Colorado LINC's **5th anniversary celebration blog series** or the Indiana MPH's **Data Day** webpage and recap.

- In Indiana, **MPH has also expanded their internal audience** by training over 1,600 active state employees in data literacy—bringing a culture of data use to all departments and for all skill levels.

We also asked sites to distinguish between communication with decisionmakers vs. communication with their closest partners—data contributing agencies and community. A little over three-quarters of respondents reported using the same communications strategy for both groups, while only seven sites indicated they did not have a formal communications strategy for either group. Typical approaches for engaging decisionmakers include standard meetings with executives or policymakers, as well as research, data, or policy briefs, and data visualizations or dashboards. Public engagement and dissemination is most commonly done through websites and newsletters. Other forms of engagement mentioned were earned media (e.g., news coverage), blogs, focus groups, and engagement tours.

Meaningful engagement should aim to communicate not only that community voices' matter, but that their contributions are central to how we think and act in response to issues, insights, and results. An exemplar of community collaboration during the data dissemination stage comes from the Broward Data Collaborative (BDC). **The Children's Services Council of Broward County**, host of the BDC, partnered with **What's Your Elephant** to curate an interactive arts exhibit based on a Community Participatory Action Research (CPAR) project they conducted in 2023. The CPAR project focused on understanding the impacts of being "Baker Acted," a term used to describe the experience of involuntary admission to a hospital for a mental health crisis in the state of Florida. The BDC brought youth and parents of children who had been "Baker Acted" and mental health system professionals together as co-researchers. In 2024, research findings were shared with artists selected through an open call for artists and translated into an interactive arts exhibit–**Echoes of Empathy**. Opening night included live performances and the exhibit continued throughout the month with the ongoing display of visual art pieces, meetings with elected officials and system leaders, and community conversations. The art exhibit reached hundreds of South Floridians, shifting the conversation around the impacts of this policy and complementing a traditional static report.

Looking Ahead

All other components of quality integrated data systems—governance, legal, technology, and capacity—exist to drive impact. By building new infrastructure, new relationships, and new ways of approaching policy, data integration efforts can transform government for the better. We hope this brief provided you with useful insight into the value of data sharing and the importance of telling impact stories.

WONDERING WHERE TO GO NEXT?

- If this document raised questions for you about IDS approaches broadly, check out our **Network map**.

- Looking for something shorter to share with a leader in your jurisdiction? We have a **two-page brief** on the value of IDS for Policymakers.

- To stay up-to-date on recent projects, findings, and achievements from across the network, **subscribe to AISP's monthly Newsletter**.

At AISP, our job is to amplify the work of our network members and create spaces for peers to learn from each other. We host monthly network calls, offer cohort-based learning communities, and foster cross-site replication of high-impact projects. We are grateful to our funders for their generous support of our role as connectors, conveners, and consultants. **We'd like to say a special thanks to members of the AISP Network—we're so proud of the work you do to share data and improve outcomes in your communities.** Thank you for your continued commitment.

A NOTE ON THE DATA

To improve data quality, initial survey results have been supplemented with document review and qualitative research. If you have questions, please reach out to **aisp@sp2.upenn.edu**.

Suggested citation: Jenkins, D., Hawn Nelson, A., Algrant, I. (2025). Network Survey Brief: Impact. Actionable Intelligence for Social Policy, University of Pennsylvania. **www.aisp.upenn.edu**