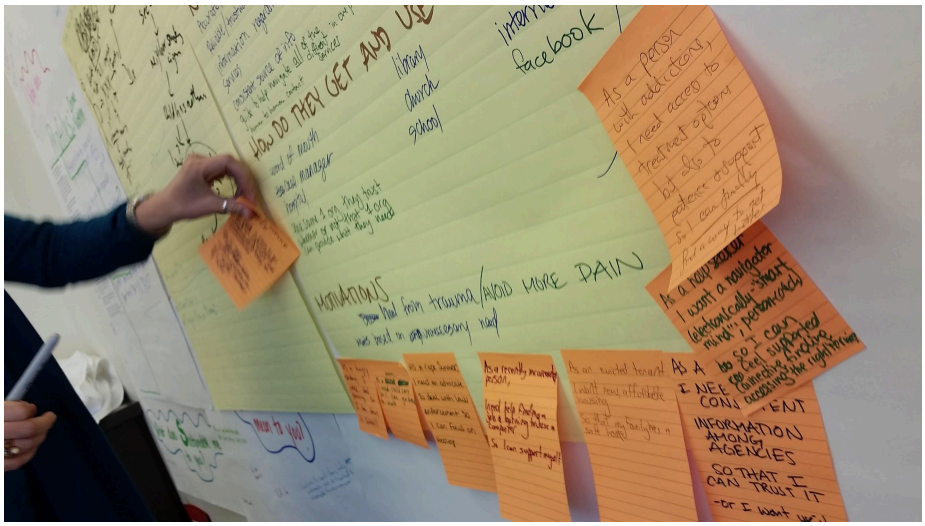
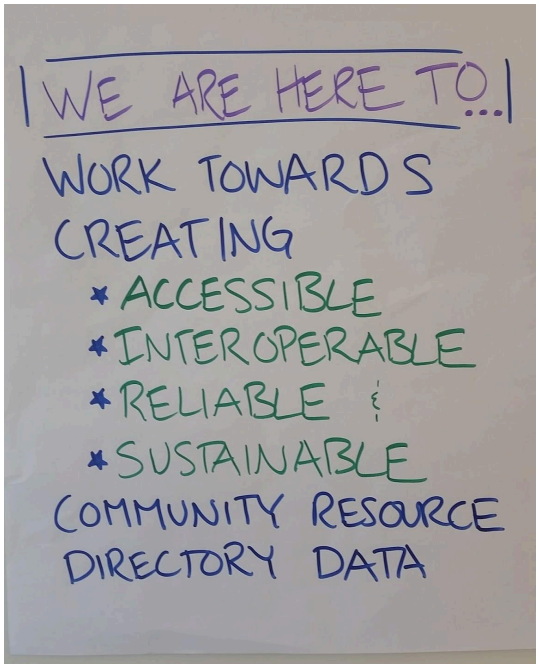
Open Referral Initiative: Workshop Reportback

July 9-10, 2014 - California Endowment in Oakland, California

Website for this event: http://openreferral.github.io/workshop/ | Raw notes document





Thanks to:

Participants:

California HealthCare Foundation	Derek Coursen	Maansi Shah	Steve Spiker	Michael Ubell
Kapor Center for Social Impact	Hailey Pate	Rick Otto	Jason Lally	Sonia Kim
Serving California	Neil McKechnie	Sonali Joshi	Clive Jones	Chris Hwang
California Endowment	Steven Strauss	Allan Baez	Judith Mayer	Sophia Parafina
Knight Foundation	Declan Frye	Jacques Katanga	Dionne Wilson	Moncef Belyamani
Code for America	Caroline Caselli	Ray Pedden	Steve Ray	Anselm Bradford

Stewards of Change Institute, Inc.
Code for America
Practicing Freedom
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Executive Summary

Purpose: To gather diverse, representative participants who are working to create accessible, interoperable, reliable and sustainable community resource directory data.

Objectives: To work towards a shared understanding of stakeholder needs and project objectives. To 'see' each others' perspectives and roles in this network, and share experiences with referral systems and data standards. To align around principles and vision, key questions and a path toward answers.

Participants: About 25 representatives of 'help seekers,' service providers (social workers, hospital staff), data administrators, and researchers; local government officials, software vendors, 'information and referral' providers such as 2-1-1, domain experts, and civic technologists from Code for America and other networks.

Activities: Listening to fellow participants, developing shared vocabulary, and formulating questions. Participatory profiling of our primary types of use (help-seekers, service providers, data administrators, and researchers); various methods of collaborative analysis of how these users interact in complex systems, and where their needs align or diverge. Deliberative dialogue around issues identified by participants, ranging from system design to governance to roadmapping the path forward.

Outcomes: We affirmed a vision of a 'common model' for community resource data that would be shaped and implemented by participants. This model would not require aggregators of community resource data to change their systems or use a new system. Rather, it could enable heterogeneous information systems distributed throughout a community to share data through some means of validation and circulation. We agreed to pilot such systems through local implementations among diverse stakeholders. The development of the common model would be managed at a global level through an accountable process directly informed by local feedback ("polycentric governance").

What comes next: Post first draft of Open Referral model for public comment, then commit for testing. Pilot projects implement model through various means of data exchange (between government, referral intermediaries, and/or community anchors), then evaluate outcome. Research precedents for long-term governance. Reconvene at second Open Referral Workshop (late 2014 or early 2015).

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Background:

The Open Referral Initiative is seeking new solutions to the old problem of community resource directory data — i.e., information about health, human, and social services.

This is vitally important information, but it's constantly changing — and there's no one channel in which new information is reported, no one system that can keep track of all of it. As a result, all kinds of directories are produced in siloes, designed only to meet the needs of their producers, which yields an information landscape that is fragmented, redundant and unreliable. If this data were 'interoperable' (meaning, different kinds of information systems in different institutional settings can 'talk' to each other) it could also become more accessible, reliable, and sustainably produced.

The Open Referral initiative has convened a table with diverse participants to explore potential solutions together. This workshop was our first convening of a representative sample of local stakeholders, domain specialists, technology entrepreneurs, information and referral professionals, government officials, service providers, and help seekers.

Purpose:

To work towards creating accessible, interoperable, reliable and sustainable community resource directory data. [photo]

Goals:

Work towards a shared understanding of stakeholder needs, vocabulary, and project objectives. Align around principles, vision, key questions, and a path towards answering them. Understand each others' perspectives and roles in this network, and share experiences with referral systems and data standards. [photo]

Organizing Team:

Shell Culp — Stewards of Change
Levana Saxon, Aja Minor — Practicing Freedom
Eric Jahn — Alexandria Consulting
Jack Madans — Code for America
Greg Bloom, Jenn Stowe, Sameer Siruguri — Open Referral

Workshop Design

Notes on methodology…

Why we chose a generative approach

At this early stage in a complex process involving multiple stakeholders, it's important to develop a deep, shared understanding of the various perspectives involved. Where are our perspectives aligned, and where do they diverge? It is not for us to decide who is in or out, or whose method is the best — but rather to identify interests that we all share, and paths forward to a world where these common needs are met.

An experiential process

Learning is best facilitated through cycles of inquiry, action, reflection, and analysis. We designed a process around concentric sets of dialogues — first between pairs and triads of participants, and then in small groups, to 'cross-fertilize' perspectives and explore our commonality. By the time we opened up to larger group dialogues, people had already enjoyed several rounds of intimate discussions, which (we believe) made for more patient, thoughtful listening and analysis.

Pre-workshop preparation…

Leading up to the workshop, our pilot leads (in San Francisco Bay and DC) worked with our lead facilitator to develop a stakeholder-led inquiry process grounded in principles of participatory action research. This process yielded a curriculum in which lead stakeholders were trained to conduct interviews with their own colleagues. In this way, small groups of users in both sites produced a rich set of insights into their current experience, and questions to guide our conversations about systems change.

Specifically, those lead stakeholder organizations included the Californians for Safety and Justice's 'victims advocacy team,' the Bay Area Regional Help Desk Consortium's community navigators, the Department of Children Youth and Families' data administrators and researchers, and service providers and data administrators from Bread for the City (in DC).

We also collected feedback from workshop participants in advance of the event, and designed parts of the agenda according to their expressed interests.

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Agenda

What we did	Objectives	Output
(DAY 1) **Welcome, introductions, orientation, history stories**	Meet each other and build relationships. Share initial perspectives. Celebrate diversity in the room.	Values [summary] Timeline [PHOTO]
Principles and practices discussion	Set tone. Model participation. 'Welcome disagreement but discourage debate.'	Empathy. Good feelings.
Profiles, personas, and user stories (Small groups sharing through World Cafe.)	Share or create 'profiles' of particular users. Comparative analysis to form general 'personas.' Generate 'user stories.'	Personas (before and after analysis) [raw notes]
"See the System" Games	Multiple methods of 'visualizing' interactions b/w different types of users, systems.	Role-play Icon collage Info scavenger hunt [notes/photos/video]
Exploring the landscape of human service Data Standards	Brief presentations from reps of AIRS, NIEM, and Open Referral. Small group 'speed-geeking'	NIEM (Eric Jahn) AIRS (Clive Jones) Open Referral (Sophia) Discussion notes
(DAY 2) **Question Hacking**	Identify "clusters" among questions that emerged in deliberation leading up to and during workshop	Question map [tk]
Open Dialogues in small groups around key themes identified above	Identify points of alignment and divergence, hypotheses, deeper questions, next steps	Reportbacks: Distributed system (tech) Governance Implementation/Evaluation
Road Mapping	Generate steps on path forward. Sort by time and priority. Accept missions!	Road map! [raw; summary]

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Sharing: what do we know?

Values

At the start of the workshop, and also towards the end of the first day, participants were prompted to offer their interpretations of what our values (the reasons why we work together through Open Referral) mean to them. Here are some responses (with photos).

Accessible	Interoperable
● Democratic ● Universal ● Easy ● "Wherever you start, it's there" ● With or without phone ● With or without computer ● Prompts ("How can we help you?") ● Simple search returns correct stuff ● The right amount of choices	● It flows between systems seamlessly ● Real-time information ● "It just works" ● No repeats

Reliable	Sustainable
● Always on ● Trustworthy ● Works the way it should when it should ● Timely and accurate ● Validated ● Relevant (details about person matched to service) ● Ahead of time ("pushed" to you)	● Lasting and self-sustaining ● Burden off service providers ● Institutional organization that provides administrative oversight, governance ● Built with the understanding that it needs to be future-proof ● Feedback mechanisms ● Healthy ecosystems ("it's alive!")

Primary types of use:
On the path towards our vision of improved systems, we first must walk through an understanding of what currently exists. So we begin by listening. Specifically, we are listening to the different perspectives of the people who use this data. Of all the vast uses, we've identified four broad types of use: **help-seeking**, **help-providing** (referring), **researching**, and **data administration**.

Our objective is to develop a generalized understanding of each of these types of use: the socioeconomic context of these users, their needs and motivations, their current behavior, etc. We start this process by developing detailed *profiles* of particular users. From multiple *profiles*, we conduct a comparative analysis of their commonalities — the sum of these commonalities are captured in a *persona*, which is our generalized understanding of that particular type of user.

From these personas, we then used various methods of analysis to identify actions that these users want to be able to take. These actions are our *user stories* (formulated in terms of "As a [type of user], I want to [do something] in order to [benefit in some way]").

What follows are the personas of our four types of use, augmented by insights from the workshop participants, with links to profiles and examples of key user stories.

Help seekers
[Crime victim profile]
[raw notes with additional profile]

Help Seeker Persona:
Help seekers (i.e. patients, clients, consumers, victims, survivors, etc.) have some pressing need (or more likely, multiple needs) which might be addressed by services in their community. To realize this possibility, help seekers must receive accurate, relevant, and easily understandable information about services which they can access and for which they are eligible. Heightened emotional reactions, illness or injury may diminish their capacity for uncertainty and decision-making.

Help seekers may not be fully capable of articulating the addressable aspect of their needs. They may have limited media literacy, and limited access to technology. They may not know about the existence of relevant services, let alone the 'correct' language to describe those services. They may have difficulty processing and/or trusting information. They may not be able to articulate their needs and may not feel safe. They may struggle with anticipated or actual stigmatization for seeking help. Incorrect information can cost help-seekers time, money, or even conceivably lives.

Help seekers might currently look for help by searching the web, or turning to a trusted community anchor like a library, school, or religious institution. They might interface with a service provider ("referrer") who might help identify addressable needs (through some screening process) and provide them with actionable information about services.

Help-seeker user stories: a sample from our list generated during the workshop.

As a help-seeker, I want to...

- know that technology is supporting humans who are providing help, rather than replacing them, so that I can still talk to a person in this process.
- have fewer places to contact so that I am not traumatized by the experience of seeking help.
- have privacy so that friends and relatives don't find out about my problems.
- receive simple, step by step instructions because when I'm stressed out I give up more readily.
- search Google for information about services from reliable sources so that I can obtain help.
- get consistent information among agencies so that I can trust it (or I won't use it).

Referrers

[Pre-written user profiles: Bread for the City; Children's Hospital Oakland]
[link to raw notes]
[photo]

Referrer Persona:

The key point in a referral process is often a person who engages directly with a help-seeker (often in person) and helps them find information about relevant and accessible services. A 'referrer' is usually (but not always) a professional or a volunteer who is working for some organization that itself provides a service to its community (i.e. case manager, social worker, health worker, EMT, patient intake, librarian, teacher, etc.) They are likely to be poorly paid and poorly trained. Referrers are typically the primary users of resource directory information systems.

Referrers want to trust the information they provide to help-seekers — trust regarding a) the information's accuracy, b) the service's relevance (is the client eligible), and c) the quality of the service. They may rely as much if not more on 'tacit' knowledge about services, drawn in their own experience, rather than an information system. They may use printed resources. Or they may use Google or other web searches. They may need to be able to deliver information in multiple languages.

Referrers often interact with help seekers in the course of some kind of structured workflow. They likely conduct a screening process which identifies important attributes of the help-seeker's situation. Referrers then match what information they have about a help-seeker to information about accessible and relevant services. Referrers are not necessarily the penultimate stop in the referrals process. A thorough referrer will call the organization before handing off the referral, and may also call to follow up.

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User Stories: a sample of our list generated during the workshop.

As a referrer (aka service provider, etc), I want to...

- Specify the type of help needed in a detailed way so that help seekers receive the specific type of help they need.
- To describe client's needs just once, so that I don't waste time.
- Track success so that over time our clients' life will improve.
- Track my cases along with where they received service so that I can respond quickly to funding researchers from the city.
- To know a change in my process will help me deliver service better than I currently do.

Researchers

[Photos: profile, persona]

Researcher Persona:

This type of use includes anyone who wants to use service directory data, in synthesis with other kinds of data, for the purpose of understanding community health, predicting future needs, identifying funding gaps, and other kinds of analysis. Such a role is often played by funders, policymakers, planners, or community leaders.

Researchers are often looking to understand the effectiveness of *programs*, which aren't necessarily specific services but rather may include a set of services that are bundled through a particular funding stream and around a common mission. Researchers are seeking accountability for the performance of the health, human, and social service system overall. They want their work to make this data useful for system-level decision-making.

They currently get data "wherever they can find it," often having to extract from excel spreadsheets or other formats that aren't designed to be used in this way.

Researchers need reliably structured data, from across institutional and jurisdictional boundaries, that can be readily 'mashed up' with other kinds of data (census, funding, etc).

Researcher User stories: a sample of our list generated during the workshop.

As a researcher, I want to…

- See meaningful context for service information so that I can perform population-level analysis.
- Know who is responsible for a service so that when it's working well (or isn't) we know who to contact to learn more… and replicate those successes or propose improvements.
- Download data in raw formats over a specific time period so I can analyze program utilization and outcomes.

Data Administration

[photos: 1, 2]

[profiles: Bread for the City, Children's Hospital Oakland, DCYF]

Data Admin Persona:

Data administration is typically an "internally facing" role, involving someone who has responsibility of some kind for an information system. This refers to the work done by system administrators, data producers, vendors, volunteer civic technologists, people who compile directories of all kinds.

Data admin are responsible for information production and maintenance — such as updating records, maintaining naming conventions, running reports, designing mechanisms for retrieval and delivery, etc. They may be responsible for reporting directly to funders and government agencies. These responsibilities are sometimes shared among several roles in an organization.

Updating data may entail email updates, verbal updates (often over the phone), web scraping, unvalidated free-form notes, vetting user-submitted input.

Administering data entails some level of technical skill, though these skills may have been gained in an ad hoc way, as a data administrator's job may not technically be in "IT." Thus, the Data Admin's ability to use a system may depend to a great extent on the available documentation and training. They may be working with ambiguous instructions, with important context that might not be explicitly conveyed.

Data admin may be trying to share the burden of data maintenance with low-level, high-turnover human resources, which means they need simple instructions that are easy to convey to newcomers and yield predictable output. Generally, they want more people to be able to make better use of the data that they are administering.

Data admin user stories:

As a data administrator, I want to:

- clear repeatable process flow, so that I can help people help me
- simple and easy to use interface, so that I can update data quickly and efficiently
- automatic and continuous data feed, so that I can speed data updates and validation
- receive feedback from users, so we can constantly improve the quality of information
- track who did what updates so that we can quickly assess the freshness and accuracy of the data

---

Visualizing the system

Having explored the perspectives of each of our types of users, our next step was to visualize the ways these users interact in a system — how does it look currently? We offered three different methods of visualizing these systems (broadly: role-playing, system mapping, and real-world information searching). Small groups undertook these

exercises, and each presented back for analysis. Through this process of analysis we generated additional user stories and criteria for success (which we've incorporated into the summary sections above in this documented).

Scavenger Hunt

Stories [raw notes]:

- Ohana API developer
- Eden I&R search / Google search

Roleplay

[narrative description - raw notes]

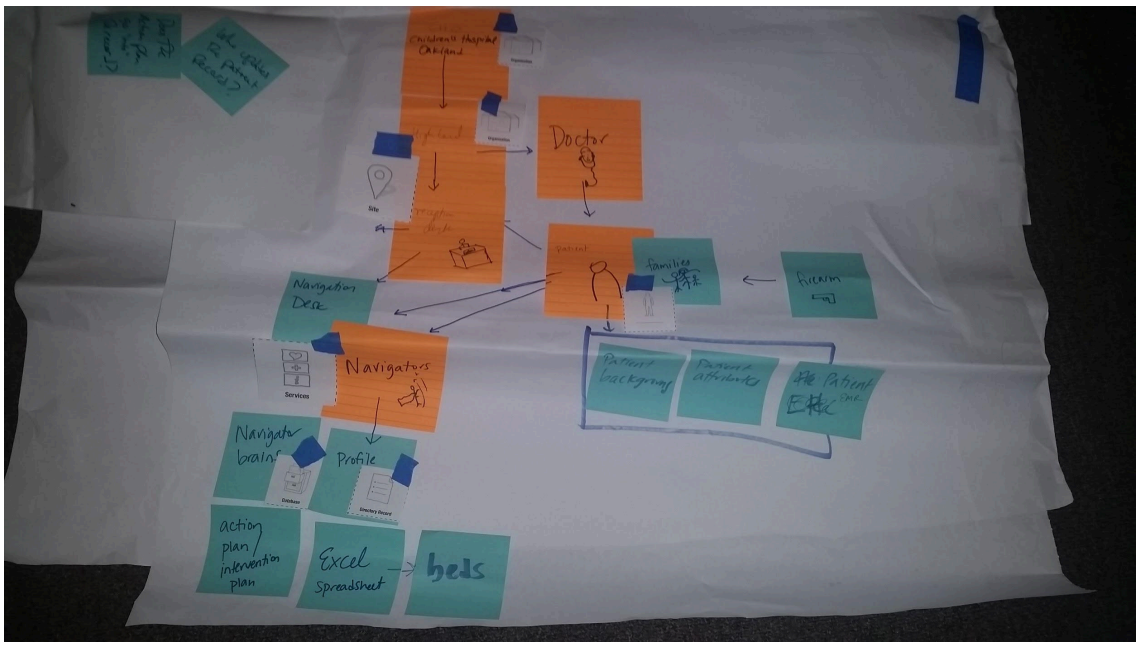
VIDEO:

As-is roleplay [Dropbox - fragment]

Ideal future state: [Youtube - full]

Icon collage

Photos:



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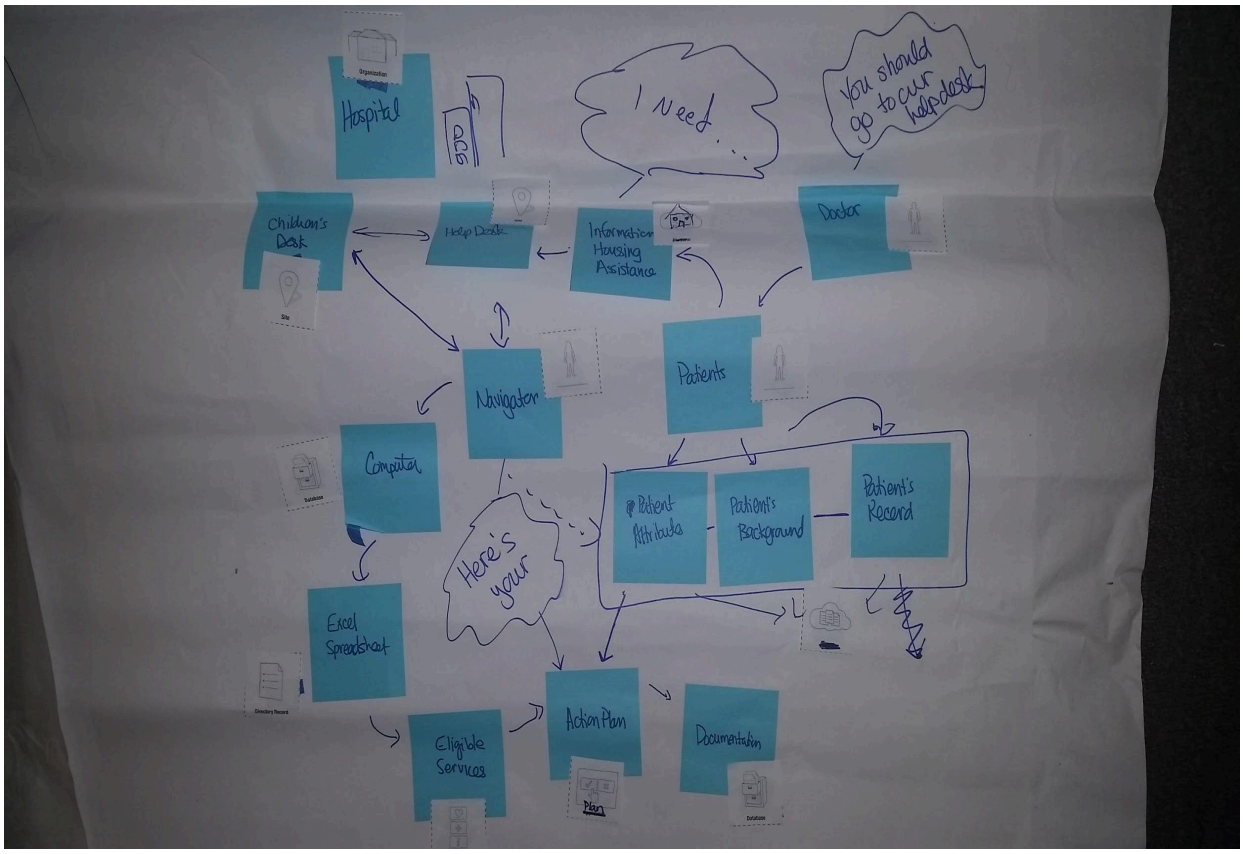

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https://www.dropbox.com/s/r5qt37or03lguh9/2014-07-11%2017.45.58.jpg

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Existing Standards

Toward the end of the first day, we heard presentations from representatives of AIRS and NIEM about existing standards — for 211/I&R in the case of the former, and health/human services enterprise architecture in the case of the latter. This was paired with a presentation about the Open Referral model, which we are collaboratively designing to function as an 'exchange format' between heterogeneous systems.

These presentations are linked here:

- NIEM (Eric Jahn)
- AIRS (Clive Jones)
- Open Referral (Sophia Parafina)

After these brief presentations, we broke into a set of small groups for 'speed-geeking,' in which each presenter held court with a facilitator and group of questioners in intimate discussions. Notes from these conversations are here.

Moving forward

Day Two: What should we do?

On the morning of the workshop's second day, having welcomed people back to the room and reviewed the previous day's output — new and deepened relationships, a shared vocabulary, documented perspectives of the primary types of users in this domain, and visualizations of their interactions with each other and various kinds of information systems — we then looked ahead with the prompt: "What should we do?"

To begin, we shared a long list of questions generated by stakeholders during both the lead-up to the workshop and the previous day. [See the sets of questions here.]

After a warm-up "snowball fight" (in which participants crumpled up handfuls of printed questions, tossed them at each other, and then each picked up and uncrumpled a new handful of questions), participants were invited to cluster these questions into emergent themes. We then broke into self-organized and self-facilitated groups to discuss these themes, with these guidelines.

Implementation and Evaluation

Raw notes here.

Questions discussed:

- How do we incentivize adoption?
- How can organizations get support for implementing standards? For developing apps that use the standards? For evaluation?
- What are the low-hanging fruit?
- What would a regional solution look like?
- How would we define success?
- What constitutes a good local team?

This group explored the motivations for organizations to participate. They identified that organizations are interested in having easier access to better quality data. However, there are barriers to sharing data — often technical, but also concerns about the quality of data (both the trust in others, and security about one's own). It may be that incentives beyond the mere sharing of data will be critical in prompting aggregators to "open up."

As for standards, participants identified that standards can make it easier for vendors to build product, and for tools to be easily redeployed. However, standards only evolve from that which works and is adopted. The group agreed that piloting is important.

Hypotheses

- An open standard is necessary for I&R orgs to openly share/publish data. (Without an open standard, organizations won't share their data.)
- By building a standard dynamically in response to a practice/pilot, the standard will be more effective.
- By developing the standard through live piloting, the standard will be adopted by key organizations.
- A standard for exchanging data between systems would not entail existing systems needing to change their internal structure significantly. A data exchange standard could be interoperable with AIRS.

Next Steps: Run successful pilots!

Building and Sustaining a Distributed System

[Raw notes here]
[Photos here: 1, 2, 3]

Questions discussed:

- How would something new fit with existing systems?
- How do people currently paid to keep data accurate continue to receive funding?
- How should data inconsistencies be handled? In an open system with different sources, which 'wins'?
- Do we need ~~authoritative~~ validated data sources? [strikethrough, revised: 'validated']
- Wiki???

Points of alignment:

- We need validated data.
- **Open Referral could provide a service for integrating community resource data from distributed systems.**
- [This] would NOT be a Wiki but it may have wiki-like aspects (community editing and trusted administrators).
    - **'First-alert' contributions could be flagged for vetting; then when validated, pushed out to members of the network.**

- The Open Referral data model will provide a core set of fields, committed to be open.
- A local community could create their own fields beyond 'the core.'
- Individual users/ organizations could still maintain their own fields beyond 'the core.'
- Some fields outside of the core could be kept private. [NOTE: There was general agreement around this — for example, consider a scenario of a shelter for survivors of domestic violence, with location and other details that require privacy — but there was some concern over the technical implications of closed fields in an open system.]

Points of divergence:

- Must there be *one* validator of any record or a system overall?
- What would be the technical and programmatic implications of allowing organizations to keep some level of service information private?

Hypotheses

1. It is possible to build an open system in which user-submitted data from distributed sources is validated by some trustworthy means.
2. Technology to achieve this already exists.

Other significant notes: Might help to separate the easy stuff (organization name, location, email, url, etc.) from the hard "real-time" stuff (availability, eligibility, etc). These are two different layers to the issue (or three? 'Entity data' that is static and rarely changes; 'dynamic data' like service hours that changes occasionally; 'volatile data' like bed availability, changing every day). "You're not to get to real-time consistency at this granularity." There could be federated data systems in which volatile data is stored in one system, which is cooperating with other systems that share the core 'entity' data.

Next steps:

- Explore existing technology that might provide solution (Github, etc)
- Implement simple steps to exchange data between two, three systems.

Governance

Questions discussed:

- How will the Open Referral schema change over time (it's lifecycle)?

- What's the relationship between the development of prototypes and the Open Referral model?
- What are we governing? (Globally: model. Locally: systems)
- How do we build trust into the system?
- How will decisions be made locally? (What are the boundaries of the local?)
- How do we ensure that people who are profiting from it don't have more power than those who use it?
- What are the ideal characteristics of a governing body?
- Is there an existing entity that could assume this responsibility? If not, do we need to formalize one?

Points of alignment:

- Transparent, documented governing process with standing decision-making capacity and clear lines of accountability accountability.
- The governing process/body should be diverse, representative of the range of stakeholders
    - (Jason Lally: "For the city of San Francisco to participate, we need to know that there is someone who is going to answer emails, address concerns, deal with issues — so that we know we are not in this alone.")
- Governing structures should be developed "as needed" — light at first, dealing with issues demanding more complexity as they arise.
- Governance must specify the boundaries between core standard and freely customizable areas.
- Local and 'global' governance systems should be in dialogue with each other, accountable to each other.
    - "Polycentric governance"
    - The 'global' model should be informed by pilots.
    - Local teams should be held to account for our shared values.

Points of divergence:

- Where does the global/local boundary lie?
- Need more clarity on what precisely is being governed.

Hypothesis:

1. **We can build trust through governance processes that are transparent and representative.**

2. **Global governance applies to the specification of the model, but not directly to its implementation.**
3. **Best practices for implementation should be established by answering common questions about local governance choices.**

NEXT STEPS

- Develop light framework for how pilots relate to evaluation of the standard
- Put fields proposed to date out for public comment <-comment from stakeholders here and our network.
- Explore existing models for governance.
  - See NIEM:
    - Paid staff supported by gov
    - certification program
    - paid technical advisory board
    - functional committee
    - Executive steering council
  - Others??
    - SDO's - Standard Development Organizations
    - Common Pool Resource Regimes (Bloomington School - Elinor Ostrom / knowledge commons)

Road-map

CATEGORY	6 MOS	12 MOS	18 MOS
Governance	➔ Draft governance principles ➔ Draft a charter	➔Review governance principles ➔Approve a charter	➔ Document best practices for local governance ➔ Proposals for post-Initiative governance approved at 2016 workshop
Pilots	➔ **Develop MOUs around data exchange for and among all entities and individuals** ➔ **Develop hypotheses for pilots (SF, Alameda, DC, [SC?])** ➔ **Identify lead stakehlders in each pilot**	➔ **Evaluation of 1st pilots** ➔ **Funding secured to fill gaps in capacity** ➔ Expand pilots into city/ county-wide resource data efforts ➔ **Review local pilot system designs**	➔ Versions ➔ Regional process/ system underway ➔ Charters for local governance systems established

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	➔ **Explore use cases involving different datasets** ➔ **Publish system design** ➔ **ID needed funding resources for pilots** ➔ Experiment with different means of validating data ➔ Explore tools (such as Github or alternative) for open source data collaboration	➔ **Deepen experiments with different means of validating data** ➔ Plan user feedback process and recruit social workers to test this **Caroline, Spike	
Open Referral model	➔ After post-workshop comment period, release v0.1 for testing**Sophia** ➔ Provide wiki of terms on Github project ➔ Document interop w/ other specs (**AIRS, W3C, NIEM)** **##??##** ➔ **Document schema (core logical data model w/ entity def's, attributes, cardinality) of data exchange v0.1****Derek**	➔Evaluate HSDS v0.1 based on pilot feedback (at 2nd, mb 3rd workshops?) ➔Develop schema (core logical data model w/ entity def's, attributes, cardinality) of next version of data exchange. ➔Clarify data management rules (what the humans do) ➔Release HSDS v0.2	➔ Conformance testing (interoperability) and cert ➔ Depending on evaluation, release v0.3 or v1.0, step back for 1-2 years.
Effort management/ ops	➔ **Fundraise for dev team for distributed update system **Greg, Jack** ➔ **Plan next summit for the fall **Jenn** ➔ **Convene consumers (vendors) **Jack**	➔Advocacy/comms to expand ➔Publish a paper with an economic model ➔ETL for integration with AIRS/iCarol (automated open data)	➔ Harvest best practices to inform scaling with nat'l partner(s) **Steve S.
Ohana API/ web search	➔ **Ohana web seach customizable **Ans** ➔ **Ohana codebase documented on Github**Ans/Ohana** ➔ **OhanaAPI follows OR dev as an example implementation**Ohana**	➔**Distributed trust model scoped and prototyped** ➔API standardization (w/ Ohana, iCarol, others) underway	

Post-Workshop analysis

Evaluations

Participants received a post-event survey, for which responses are here. Generally speaking, the feedback was largely positive. [See summary PDF here.]

The process of profiling types of users and developing generalized personas received extremely high reviews. There was a generally positive reaction to the methods of visualizing multiple users within a system (especially the role-playing; the least favorite method was the 'icon collage,' i.e. system mapping, which participants felt was rushed).

Some found the dialogues of the second day to be challenging. A few participants noted that the efforts to prioritize certain topics weren't successful at focusing the discussion. Others noted that the complexity of the structure and process of the initiative to date had not been made fully clear, and not everyone was on the same page about what Open Referral is, which made for confusing dialogue. A sense that there was not enough time.

The part of the process with the most mixed responses was the 'road mapping' exercise at the end. Participants reported a desire to have had more time for this segment, and also concern that we hadn't clearly established accountability for declared objectives.

There was general enthusiasm — with a few points of concern, but no outright objection — for each of the components of structure and process proposed for moving forward. Finally, participants reported a significant increase in understanding of the problem and the process, as well as confidence that solutions are possible.

Post-event blog posts from participants: Caroline Casseli's, and Derek Coursen's.

Self-evaluations

[Photo of debrief]

The Workshop team's self-evaluations generally reflected participants' evaluations. Overall, we agreed that the workshop succeeded in its goals: we celebrated the work of participants, developed shared understanding of each others' roles in the network and a shared vocabulary for describing the problem, and aligned around principles and vision.

We observed that the activities of developing profiles and personas were strong, but the facilitation around developing user *stories* was not as on-point as it should have been, and this is reflected in quality of the stories.

Though the visualization games were generally successful, more time for all of them, and more practice / better tools for the info hunt and icon collage in particular, could improve results dramatically.

There was some ambivalence about our choice to hold back the structure for the Open Referral initiative that had been proposed by its leadership. Ultimately, the groups arrived at conclusions that essentially aligned with this proposal — very much a validating outcome. But many expressed frustration and confusion in the conversations along the way to that point (especially during the second day); confusion around the notion of a format and a system, around the structure of local leadership and global governance, etc. Some facilitators felt that the leadership was then intervening too strongly to present our pre-conceived thinking around these points; others felt that intervention was necessary in the face of confusion.

Stepping back from the workshop itself, we also observed that much improvement could be brought to the planning process. The majority of that process was spent on constructing and reconstructing the agenda, and less on thinking through the fundamentals: our purpose, collective objectives and the perspectives of the people we wanted in the room. In future planning processes, we may leave the particulars of the agenda to be established later on in the process, with more emphasis put up front on thinking through desired outcomes and participants' roles.

Changes for next time

Having received participatory validation (and refinement) of the initiative's framework, we feel more confident in bringing its complexity to the forefront of future workshops.

An essential component of this improvement will be visuals and other tools to convey key concepts about the initiative through multiple methods. Training of a set of co-facilitators in advance of the event may be especially useful.

We might feature a series of topic-specific quite-brief talks throughout future workshops, as capstones of the kinds of thematic discussions developed here.

Finally, while the representation of 2-1-1s and I&Rs at this session was strong and essential, we expressed an interest in seeing even more participation from leadership of the I&R domain, as well as opportunities to share skills across domain, generational, and technical boundaries.

Plans for next time

Six months from now, in the District of Columbia? More details TK.

Appendix: The Open Referral Model

The Human Services Data Specification (i.e. 'Open Referral') is an exchange format for publishing machine readable data about health, human, and social services, their locations, and the organizations that provide them. The Open Referral pilot projects (of which we had diverse representation at the Workshop) include various institutions that commit to implement and evaluate this **Open Referral model** through open data exchanges between heterogeneous systems.

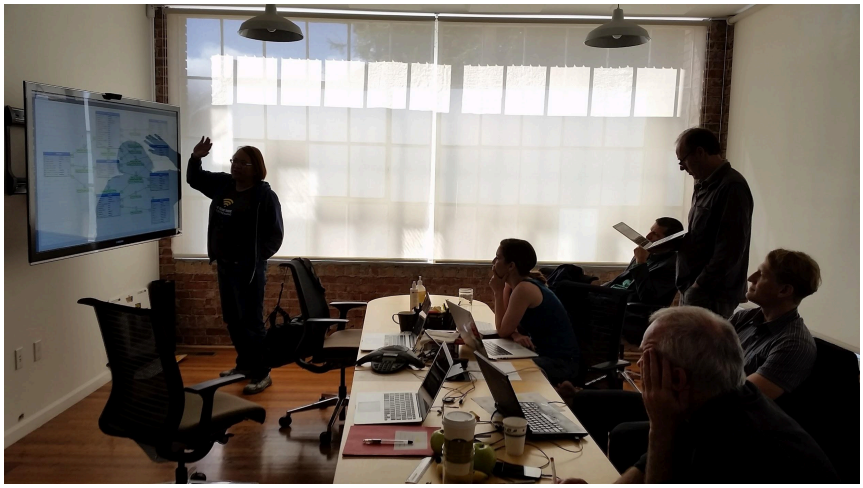
The Open Referral Workgroup consists of a designated set of practitioners and specialists from the fields of human service informatics and civic data standards [full description here]. The Workgroup met in person for the first time immediately following this Workshop. During that time, they reviewed feedback on v0.0 of the Open Referral model, and plotted a course towards a formal 'alpha' model (the anticipated v0.2).

Human Services Data Specification -

Link to Human Services Data Spec v0.1 document; Github repo

Open Referral Workgroup

[photo]



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